



February 2002 - Rs. 10/-

CHANDAMAMA



Kohito
finds peace
Page : 26

MAHE...

SANDAL SIZZLER

JUST FOR U!



$12 \div 3 + 4 = ?$

$12 \div 2 \div 2 = ?$

$4 \times 2 - 6 + 2 = ?$

$36 - 24 \div 3 = ?$

$5 + 8 - 1 \div 4 = ?$

$8 \times 6 \div 12 = ?$

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$7 \times 4 - 12 = ?$

Li'l Chinnu's looking for sandalwood trees and can't identify them in this huge forest. But there is a simple way of doing it. Look closely at the trees. There are number puzzles on all of them. Go ahead, and solve them. The trees which have 4 as the answer, are the sandalwood trees. Now can you help Chinnu find them?

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Saga of India

41



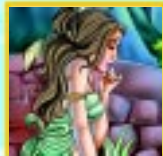
The story of Ganesa

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The Demoness of Abuse

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Kohito finds Peace

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Founded by

B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

Keywords for 21st century

We often hear of the appearance of viruses in different forms that contaminate the atmosphere and affect the healthy functioning of the human body. These viruses are born out of Nature and remain active in air, water, and earth and are carried by plants and animals. However, such viruses are controlled, treated, and also prevented with the help of scientific and technological devices.

On the contrary, there are certain viruses which take birth in the minds of human beings and which go by the nomenclature of ideology. Ideology has been defined as 'a belief or set of beliefs, especially the political beliefs on which people, parties, or countries base their actions'. Though it is the result of an urge to achieve something, often it is not in the interests of mankind and do not bring about any improvement or benefit to mankind.

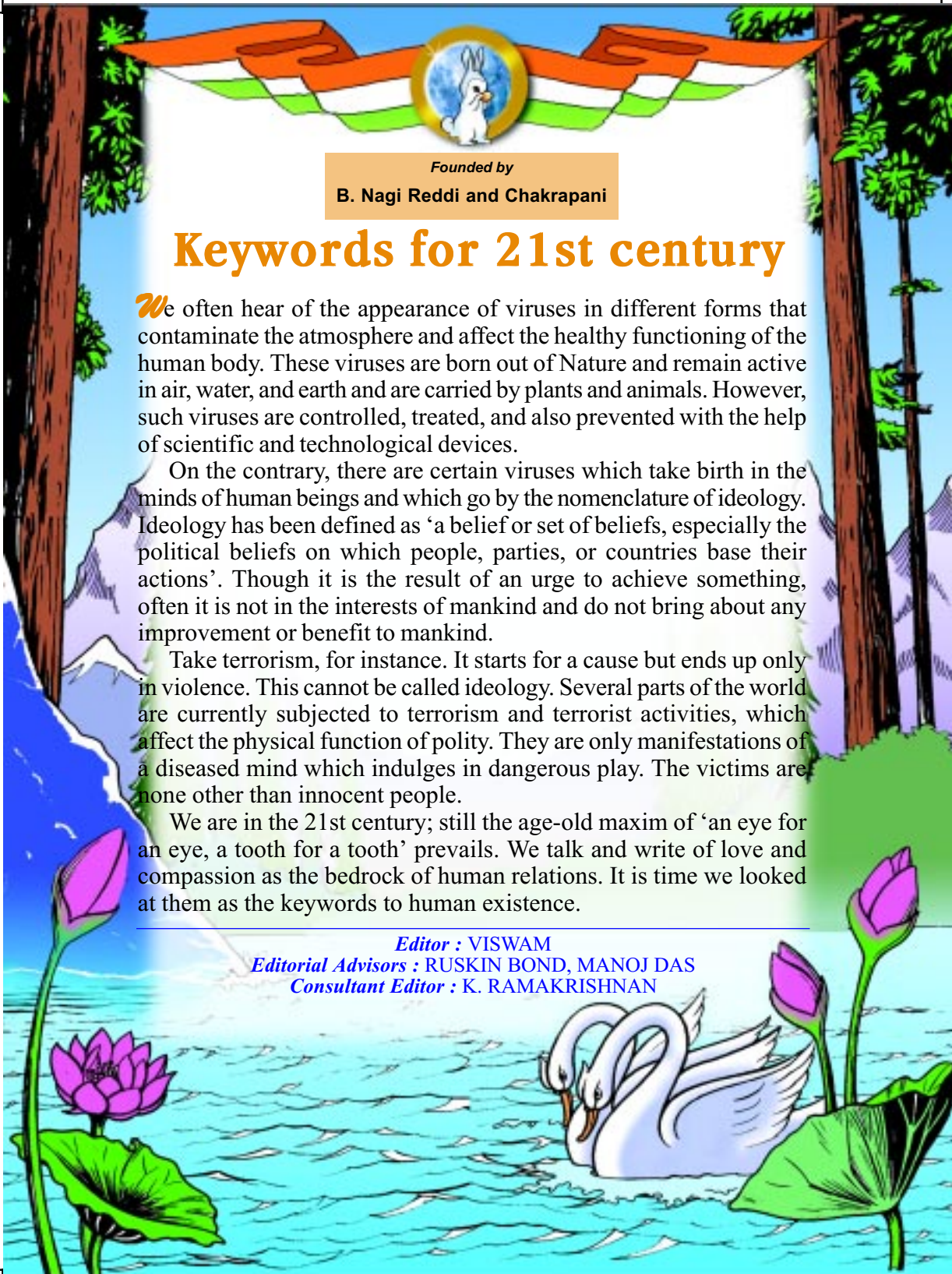
Take terrorism, for instance. It starts for a cause but ends up only in violence. This cannot be called ideology. Several parts of the world are currently subjected to terrorism and terrorist activities, which affect the physical function of polity. They are only manifestations of a diseased mind which indulges in dangerous play. The victims are none other than innocent people.

We are in the 21st century; still the age-old maxim of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' prevails. We talk and write of love and compassion as the bedrock of human relations. It is time we looked at them as the keywords to human existence.

Editor : VISWAM

Editorial Advisors : RUSKIN BOND, MANOJ DAS

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Enter the Heroes of India Quiz and win fabulous prizes

Heroes of India - 5

India's freedom struggle threw up many heroes. Here are some of them. Can you identify them?

**Three
all correct entries
will receive bicycles
as awards.***



1 He founded the Indian National Army. You need no other clue to guess his name!

2 He is known as the 'Champion of the Seas'. This man from Tamil Nadu defied the British to run his own shipping company. Who is he?

3 This freedom fighter earned a title because he had killed a tiger in his childhood. Do you know who he is?

4 He and his friends stopped a train at Bajnagar and removed a chest of money, to buy weapons to fight the British. Who was this?

5 He led Nana Sahib's army and captured Kanpur from the British. He helped the Rani of Jhansi to occupy Gwalior during the Revolt of 1857. Name him.

Fill in the blanks next to each question legibly. Which of these five is your favourite national hero and why? Write 10 words on **My favourite national hero is**

.....

Name of participant:.....

.....Age:.....Class:.....

Address:.....

.....

Pin:.....Ph:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Signature of parent:.....

Please tear off the page and mail it to

Heroes of India Quiz-5

CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED

No.82, Defence Officers Colony

Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.

On/before **March 5, 2002**

Instructions

1. The contest is open to children in the age group 8-14 years.
2. *Three winners will be selected for this contest from entries in all the language editions. **Winners will receive bicycles of appropriate size.** If there are more than one all correct entries, winners will be selected on the basis of the best description of **My favourite hero.**
3. The judges' decision will be final.
4. No correspondence will be entertained in this regard.
5. The winners will be intimated by post.

**Prizes brought
to you by**



The First Spring Flower



*I*t was the first day of Spring (according to the Hindu calendar), but here, in the Himalayas, it still seemed midwinter. A cold wind hummed and whistled through the pines, while dark

rain clouds were swept along by the west wind only to be thrust back by the east wind.

I was climbing the steep road to my cottage at the top of the hill when I was overtaken by 9-year old Usha hurrying back from school. She had tied a scarf around her head to keep her hair from blowing. The dark hair and eyes and pink cheeks were all accentuated by the patches of snow still lying on the hillside.

“Look!” she said, pointing. “A new flower!”

It was a single, butter-yellow blossom and it stood out like a bright star against the drab winter grass. I hadn’t seen anything like it before and had no idea what its name might be. No



doubt its existence must have been recorded in some botanical tome. But, for me it was a new discovery.

“Shall I pick it for you?” asked Usha.

“No, don’t,” I said. “It may be the only one. If we break it, there may not be any more. Let’s leave it there and see if it seeds.”

We scrambled up the slope and examined the flower more closely. It was very delicate and soft-petalled, looking as though it might fall at any moment.

“It will be finished if it rains,” said Usha.

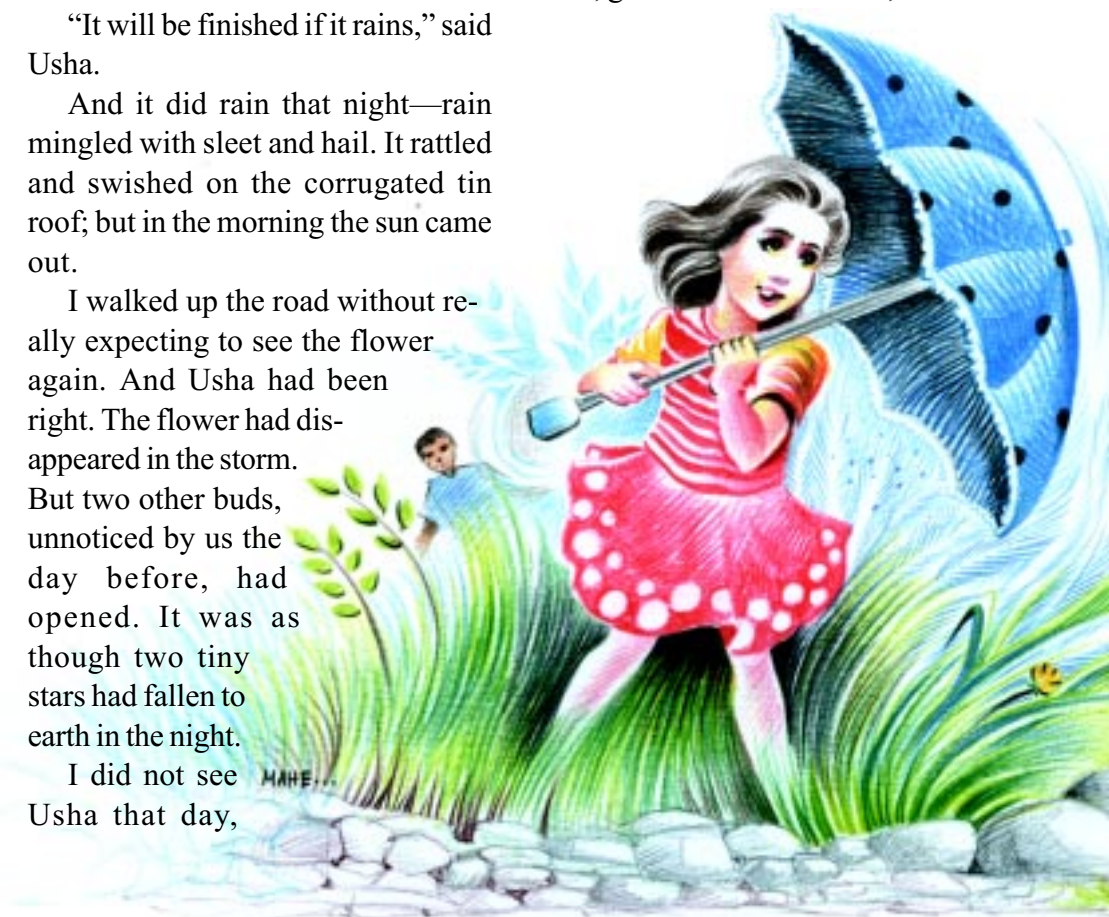
And it did rain that night—rain mingled with sleet and hail. It rattled and swished on the corrugated tin roof; but in the morning the sun came out.

I walked up the road without really expecting to see the flower again. And Usha had been right. The flower had disappeared in the storm. But two other buds, unnoticed by us the day before, had opened. It was as though two tiny stars had fallen to earth in the night.

I did not see Usha that day,

but the following day when we met on the road, I showed her the fresh blossoms. And they were still there, two days later, when I passed by, but so were the two goats grazing on the short grass and thorny thickets of the slope. I had no idea if they were partial to these particular flowers, but I did know that goats would eat almost anything and I was taking no chances.

Scrambling up the steep slope, I began to shoo them away. One goat retreated, but the other lowered his horns, gave me a baleful look, and re-



fused to move. It reminded me a little of my grandfather's pet goat who had once pushed a visiting official into a bed of nasturtiums. So I allowed discretion to be the better part of valour and backed away.

Just then Usha came along and, sizing up the situation, came to the rescue. She unfurled her pretty blue umbrella and advanced on the goat, shouting at it in goat-language. (She had her own goats at home.) The beast retreated, and the flowers (and my dignity) were saved.

As the days grew warmer, the flowers faded and finally disappeared. I forgot all about them and so did Usha. There were lessons and exams for her to worry about, and rent and electricity bills to occupy a freelance writer's thoughts.

The months passed, summer and

autumn came and went, with their own more showy blooms, and in no time at all, winter returned with cold winds blowing from all directions.

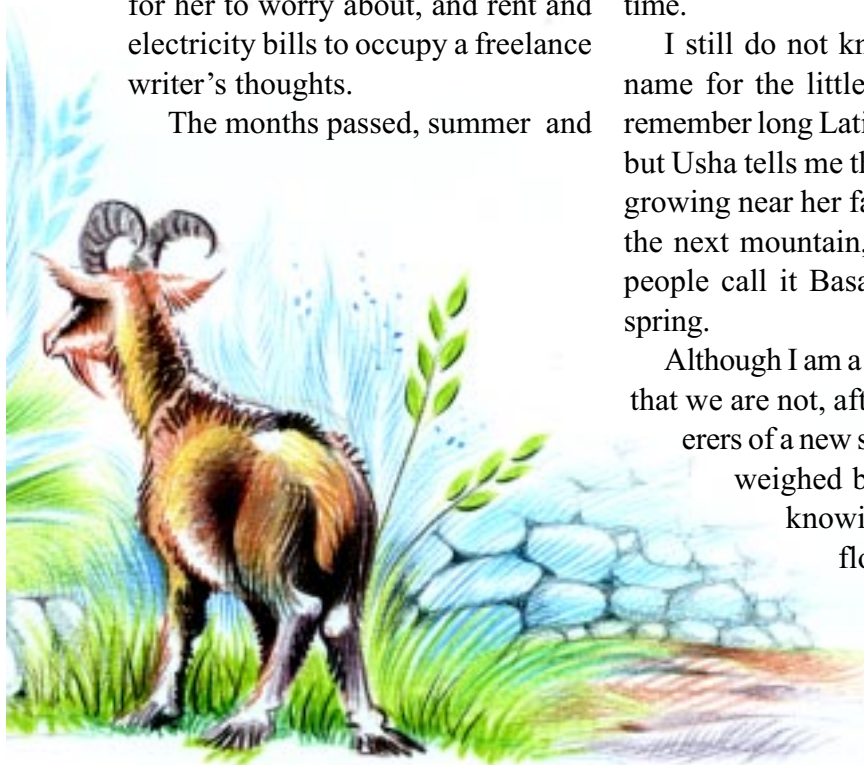
One day, I heard Usha calling to me from the hillside. I looked up and saw her standing behind a little cluster of golden star shaped flowers—not, perhaps, as spectacular as Wordsworth's field of golden daffodils, but nevertheless an enchanting sight for one who had played a small part in perpetuating their existence.

Where there had been one flowering plant, there were now several. Usha and I speculated on the prospect of the entire hillside being covered with the flowers in a few years time.

I still do not know the botanical name for the little flower. I cannot remember long Latin names, anyway, but Usha tells me that she had seen it growing near her father's village, on the next mountain, and that the hill people call it Basant, which means spring.

Although I am a little disappointed that we are not, after all, the discoverers of a new species, this is outweighed by our pleasure in knowing that the flower flourishes in adversity. May it multiply!

February 2002





A QUIZ FOR YOU!

Koraput

Nature lovers will love Koraput. This district of Orissa abounds in natural beauty. It is at a height of 2,990 ft and located close to the famous Dandakaranya forests.

Jeypore, the commercial nerve centre of Koraput district, is endowed with waterfalls, and forests full of wildlife. Jeypore is also an ideal base from where one can plan visits to the neighbouring tourist spots.

Duduma, a beautiful waterfall is situated on River Machhakund, 70 km from Jeypore.

Another place of tourist interest is Gupteswar. At this scenic spot there is a cave shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva Gupteswar. This is 58 km from Jeypore.

Rayagada, the headquarters of the district by the same name, lies on the way to Koraput from Berhampur. This place is also known for its scenic beauty. Minajhola, 134 km away, is at the confluence of three rivers. It is not only rich in natural scenery but also known to be a holy place. Koraput is also the home of many tribes.

A QUIZ FOR YOU!

For children up to 14 years

CONTEST - VI

1. An aero-engine factory is situated in the lush green valleys in the Koraput district. Do you know in which place it is located?

2. Asia's largest aluminium producer, NALCO, is located close to Koraput. Where is the factory?

3. This beautiful place has two waterfalls along River Nagavalli. Two uniquely shaped boulders that are located here are very famous. Name this spot?

Write your answers legibly in the blank space provided, fill in the coupon below and send the entry to

Orissa Tourism Quiz Contest
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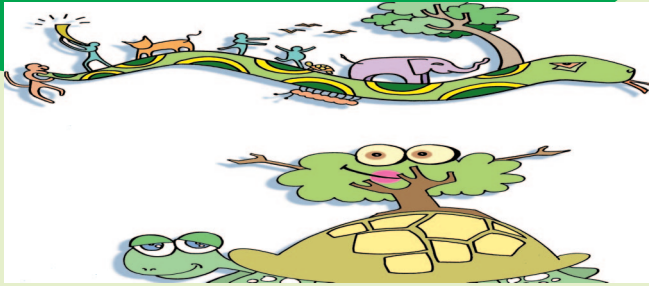
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Winners picked by Orissa Tourism in each contest will be eligible for **3 days, 2-night** stay at any of the **OTDC Panthanivas**, upto a maximum of four members of a family. Only original forms will be entertained. The competition is not open to CIL and Orissa Tourism family members. Orissa Tourism, Paryatan Bhaven, Bhubaneswar-751 014. Ph: (0674) 432177, Fax : (0674) 430887, e-mail : ortour@sancharnet.in. Website : Orissa-tourism.com

NBSAaaaanP's



It may sound strange, but many people in India do not take decisions affecting their own lives and jobs! But here's a project that is different: the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of the Ministry of Environment and

Forests, involves tens of thousands of persons, including students. Biodiversity, as you know, is the vast variety of plants and animals around us, which we all love and depend on. This Plan is being coordinated by Kalpavriksh, a 22-year-old environmental action group. NBSAP and Kalpavriksh now bring to you a series of stories, presented by none else than the hissing, slithering, and lovable NBSAaaaaanP!

The Indian Cowboy's Dilemma

Kisan was a gowari (cowboy). He was 10 years old. Today, as usual Kisan sat on his buffalo, Bhondu, and played the tune of his favourite song on his bamboo flute, the one that he had made for himself a few days ago:

"In every forest, mother nature provides all our needs

The kingfisher is so pretty,

The koel fills the air with good sound

The teetar and the wild boar are so tasty,

The plant gulvel is nectar

And the neck of the tortoise can cure many things!"

Kisan lived in Kinwat taluk of Nanded district in Maharashtra, a region that has scrub and thorn forests.

Kisan sang, played his flute, and ran after the buffaloes and cows, scolding them when they did not listen. His herd

February 2002



strayed through the forest and crossed the stream.

After crossing the stream, the cattle settled down for grazing in the moist grasslands they came upon. This was a daily routine. While the cattle grazed, Kisan would sit under a tree with his bamboo flute and his packed lunch.

But today he had come with a mission: he was searching for the *bhui amla*. Kisan looked around the moist grasslands searching for the plant, which was a miniature of the *amla* (*Phyllanthus Officinalis*) tree. The plant is called *bhui amla*, which means the *amla* that grows along the ground. This herb bears small round fruits on the rear side of its leaf

stem. His mother had asked him to collect some of these fresh fruits for his grandmother who was suffering from jaundice, which this fruit can cure.

The *bhui amla* was known to be available in plenty, but today Kisan could simply not find any. He wandered into the clumps of trees and bushes that fringed the grasslands in search of the fruits.

“Ouch!” a piercing pain in his right foot caused Kisan to stop suddenly and cry out. A thorn of the *babul* tree had got deep into his foot as he skipped along the soft black soil of the grasslands. Kisan was not perturbed because he knew of the magic plant *ark*, which can pull out the thorn. The plant grew everywhere. Ah, there it was! Kisan hopped up to it, plucked a leaf and carefully applied the white milk that oozed out of its node to the area where the thorn had gone in. As he applied the latex, he remembered his mother’s warning: “Son, be careful with the *ark* leaf!” she had once warned him.



“The milk that oozes out of it is like fire. If even a drop of it touches your eyes, it can burn out the eyes and blind you.” In Sanskrit, *ark* means ‘the sun’.

Then he plonked down on the ground and waited. Fifteen minutes later the thorn came up to the surface of the skin! He got up and limped his way on, his eyes darting keenly from plant to plant in search of the elusive *bhui amla*.

Soon the sun was high in the sky and it was approaching noon. Kisan was sweating profusely. He had strayed far from his cattle. He was hungry and irritated.

“Are you looking for something?” A loud voice boomed in his ears, and he nearly jumped out of his skin. It was his friend Goma, who usually grazed his family goats alongside him. Goma was late today. As Kisan straightened up to chat with his friend, he noticed that Goma’s face was all puffed up. “What’s the matter with your face?” he asked him.

Goma explained that he had by mistake slept under the *bhallatak* tree the previous night. Everyone knows that it is good to sleep under the *neem* tree but not under a *bhallatak* or a tamarind tree because these trees give out heat. In fact, the black oil of the *bhallatak* seed, which the washermen use for marking clothes, is so repulsive to insects and pests that farmers smear the



oil on the walls of bamboo bins in which grain is stored so that no insects attack the precious foodgrain.

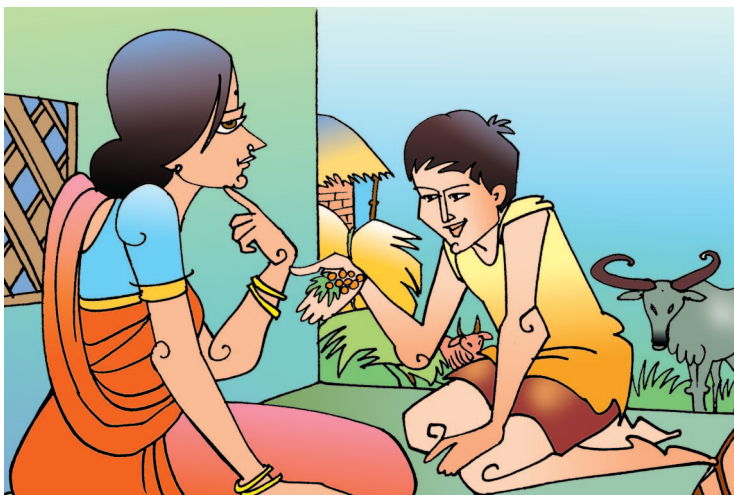
Soon Kisan had poured out his woes to his friend. “I wish grandmother would just go to the doctor and take some pills, instead!” grumbled Kisan. “I’m tired of searching for *bhui amla*.”

“Don’t worry,” said Goma. “I’ll help you collect the fruits. Come, let’s search together.” The two friends ran here and there, calling out to each other in cheerful banter. They came back to the stream for a quick gulp of cool water and later plunged into the search. It was Goma who saw it first. “Kisan! Come, here it is.” Kisan joined him in a jiffy and soon

the two friends had gathered all the fruits they could carry!

Late afternoon, the two turned homewards with their herds. Kisan reached home as the sun was setting. The cows had grazed well and were happy. As he filled his mother's lap with the fruits, he said: "Do you know how

and trouble you took to find this herb for her, you're after all doing this for *your* grandmother. Wouldn't you be happy to find her hale and healthy soon? Pills are fine when you don't have options, but what better medicines than the ones Mother Nature has given you!"



Of course, both of them were unaware that an American Nobel Prize winner had been granted a "patent" for the use of *bhui amla* for the treatment of Hepatitis B.

Kisan ran away to the yard. As he tied the cattle in the shed, he hummed away:

*"In every forest, mother nature provides all our needs
The kingfisher is so pretty,*

The koel fills the air with magic sound

The teeter and wildboar are so tasty,

*The plant gulvel is nectar
And the neck of the tortoise can cure many things!"*

And this time he meant it!

-Darshan Shankar

much time it took me to locate the plants? Why didn't you just take grandma to the doctor for pills?"

His mother laughed. "My child, the doctor says there are no pills for jaundice. But Mother Nature has been kind enough to give us this herb as a cure for this illness. And as for the time

An estimated 8,000 species of medicinal plants have been known to the people of India. These plants are distributed across the diverse eco-systems, from the trans-Himalayas to the coastal plains. There are around 50,000 herbal formulations for a wide range of health conditions that are documented in Ayurvedic medical texts.

A Tale from Tibet

Magician turned monk

A long time ago, Mila Repa, the Tibetan monk and troubadour, travelled through the mountains and valleys of Tibet, braving the freezing cold and icy winds clad only in a thin white cotton cloth from which he got his name Repa, which means the cotton-clad one. He composed and sang beautiful songs as he meditated and spread the word of the Buddha.

In the Himalayan mountains, nestling between the icy peak of Mt Kailasa and the sapphire waters of the

holy lake Manasarovar, is the monastery of the miracle cave or Zutul Puk Gompa. This is the cave where Mila Repa sat down to meditate.

When Mila Repa first entered the cave, he found it a little too cramped, so he pushed the rocky roof up with his hands. But even magicians can miscalculate, and the cave became too large and draughty. So he climbed onto the top to stamp it down. It is said that the marks of his hand and footprints can still be seen on the

rock. Pilgrims even today enter the cave to worship an image of Mila Repa inside in a seated posture.

Mila was very young when his father died. His uncle and aunt grabbed all that he had inherited and drove Mila and his mother out into the streets. His mother was very upset and swore vengeance. She brought up Mila to feel that he should take



revenge on these relations who had done them so much injustice. His uncle only laughed and taunted the young boy and said: "If you are many, declare war on us; if you are alone, cast a spell on us!"

The young boy took him seriously, and when he grew into a young man, he went off to look for a sorcerer who would teach him the art of black magic. He did find such a person and spent many years with him learning how to cast all manner of spells.

When Mila felt he had learnt enough, he cast a spell on his uncle's house. Now that house had been built in the typical Tibetan way with a wooden storey above a stone floor around a central pillar which supported the whole house.

It so happened that when Mila cast the spell, his uncle was hosting a grand feast. There were many guests invited, who were being entertained, as was the practice, on the first floor, while all the horses and other animals were stabled below. A maid who came into the courtyard on some work was deluded by the spell into thinking that a scorpion as big as a yak was pulling the central pole of the house. She was terrified

out of her wits and went shrieking into the night. She made so much noise that the horses got upset and fell on each other. This created such a stampede that it rocked the house violently and the whole structure came crashing down, killing all the people in the house except the old aunt and uncle.

Mila wanted them to survive so that they would live to suffer the anguish of the loss. The old widow, Mila's mother, soon got to hear of the tragedy and came to the scene to add her taunts and jibes to the old couple's grief.



However, Mila had to flee the country to escape the consequences of his actions. While in exile, Mila had plenty of time to repent. And he did. He was full of remorse for what he had done. He was really quite a sensitive soul, and the terrible effects of his spells tormented him continuously. He yearned for peace and wanted to understand the true meaning of life.

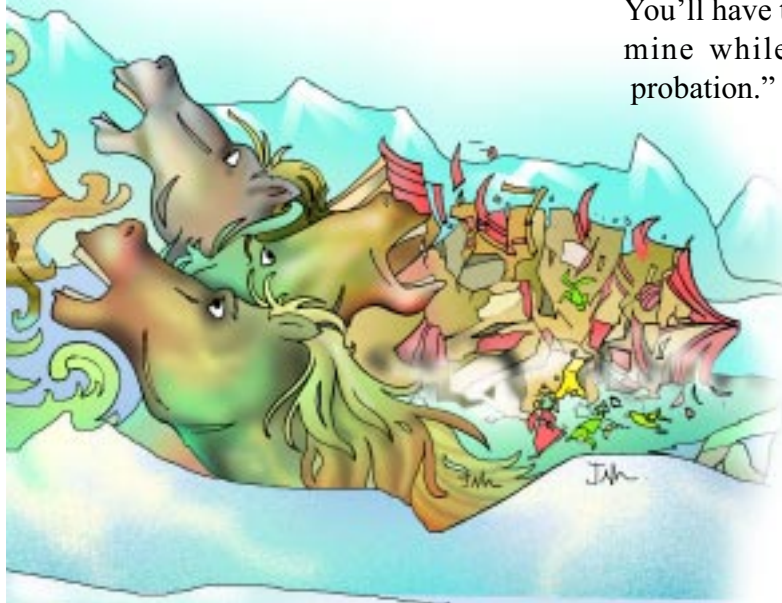
One day, someone mentioned the name of Marpa the Translator to him. Marpa was given the epithet translator because he brought back many Buddhist works from India and translated them into Tibetan. He was regarded as a great spiritual being and teacher. Mila instantly felt that this was the master who could help him

and lead him to peace and understanding. At once he set off for Hlobrak where Marpa lived. Once he got there, he offered himself totally to the master and prayed that he guided him to the Truth.

Marpa, with the second sight common to all great gurus, was expecting him eagerly. However, when Mila did approach him, he pretended to be angry.

“What!” he cried indignantly. “How dare you expect me to impart all the great knowledge and insights I have gathered with so much difficulty and at so much risk to myself to just anyone who asks me? Especially, to a sinner who has harmed and murdered so many! I’ll teach you only when I’m convinced of your worth and sincerity. You’ll have to surrender your will to mine while you serve out your probation.”

Mila was determined that Marpa should be his master and so he agreed to serve him in whatever way he wanted. Marpa proved to be a hard taskmaster. He put Mila through tests and tasks that would have broken anyone else’s spirit. Though Marpa secretly thought very highly of Mila’s potential and

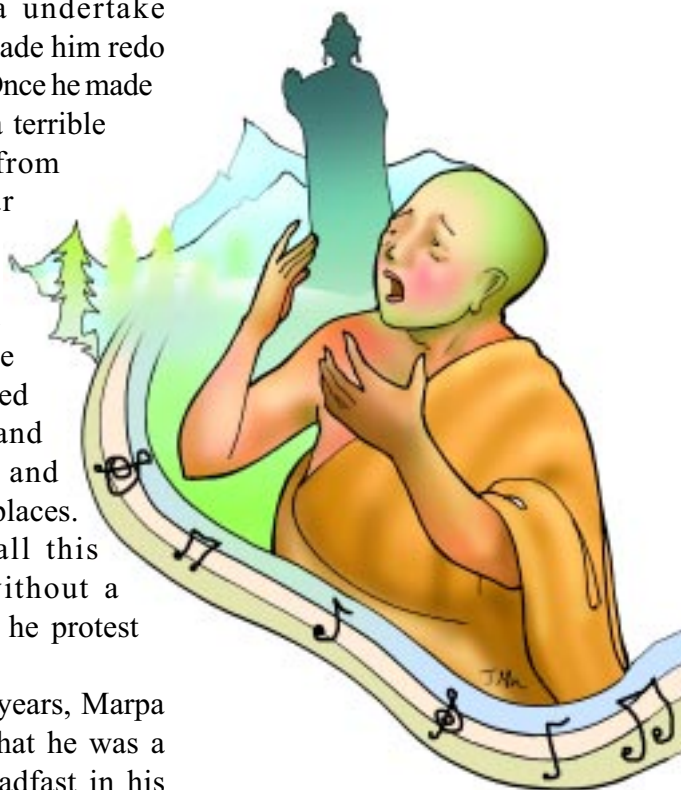


commitment, he snubbed him and spoke to him harshly at the slightest excuse. He made him undertake many distasteful tasks. For instance, he made use of his magical skills in cold blood to punish some villagers who he claimed had upset him. Mila felt humiliated and anguished at having to do this, but he grit his teeth and did whatever his chosen master asked him to do. Marpa wanted Mila to understand the true enormity of his crimes. Later, Marpa himself restored the villagers to their previous prosperity.

Marpa made Mila undertake difficult tasks that he made him redo and undo immediately. Once he made him build a house on a terrible site, bringing rocks from peaks and valleys far away; when it was complete, he sauntered up to it and said: "I must have been mad to have this built here." He asked Mila to demolish it and restore all the rocks and stones to their original places. Mila went through all this exercise patiently without a murmur. Not once did he protest or complain.

Finally, after many years, Marpa felt Mila had proved that he was a sincere seeker and steadfast in his February 2002

search for Truth. He relented and agreed to initiate Mila into the faith. Then, in the centre of a sacred circle, Marpa admitted his favourite pupil into the order and cut his hair. After that Mila Repa made great spiritual progress and in one lifetime achieved what is supposed to take many lives. He spent the rest of his life meditating in the caves of the Himalayas, and many disciples flocked to him for guidance. He also composed hundreds of beautiful songs which the people of Tibet still remember and love.





New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala

The Demoness of Abuse

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie sounds of the laughter of spirits. But King Vikram did not swerve. Undeterred, he set off after the Vetala that had flown back to the tree with the corpse. The king climbed the ancient tree once again



with grim determination, brought the corpse down, and flinging it over his shoulders, he walked towards the cremation ground.

However, as soon as he began crossing the place, with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: “O King, I can’t understand what your aim is. What is it you wish, for which you’re undergoing such difficulties? It is midnight, pitch dark out here, and one cannot see anything. Are you not frightened? Why are you risking your life amidst wild animals, ghosts, and poisonous creatures? Let me also know what your aspiration is. It has been often seen that a person, in his attempts to

fulfil his desires, comes under so much stress and pressure that, in the end, he even forgets what he is seeking. I shall tell you the story of a girl called Aruna who received a boon from a *maharishi*. But she did not take advantage of it for herself, but used the boon for the welfare of others without any thought. The story will teach you not to commit such foolishness. Now relax, and listen to the story attentively.” The Vetala then started his narration.

Ganga was a talkative and abusive woman. She never lost an opportunity to abuse anyone. Birbal, her husband, was a gentle person and tolerated all the filthy words she threw at him. They had a son whom they named Bhim. He grew up to be a quiet person, like his father. He feared no one in this world except his mother.

One day, Bhim went to Gangapur to buy a silk sari for his mother. This village was very famous for its silk saris. People from far off places came here to buy them. Ganga had long wished to buy a sari from this village. She told Bhim the exact colour and design that she expected in the sari.

Bhim visited many weavers but he could not find a sari that matched his mother’s specifications. He could imagine what would happen if he went home without the sari: his mother would

scold him and abuse him in foul language. He did not know what to do. Dejected, he sat under a tree on the banks of a river.

Just then, there came by a group of girls. This was their daily routine: they would come there about that time every day with their pots, bathe in the river, fill the pots and return home. One of those girls was Aruna. She asked Bhim in a harsh tone: "Hey! Why are you sitting here? Don't you know that we girls come here every day for our bath?"

Bhim was upset at her tone and explained why he was sitting there. After hearing this, Aruna started laughing loudly and said: "What kind of a woman is your mother? Either she should have herself come to buy the sari or sent a woman. Look at that! She has sent an innocent and helpless man like you! Don't worry. I'll help you. Go to the village and ask for Shivraj's house. Wait for me there. I'll get the sari of your mother's choice. Then watch your mother praise you."

Bhim left the place silently and waited for her at Shivaraj's house. Aruna came there after some time. She asked him how Ganga looked. She then pulled out a cheap sari and gave it to him.

"Go home and give this to your mother. Tell her that the weaver said a queen had purchased a similar sari five



years ago. Also tell her that the weaver wondered how two women could have the same taste. Your mother will be pleased, because she has been compared to a queen. Don't worry. Your mother will definitely like the sari."

Bhim returned to the village and repeated Aruna's words to his mother. She was pleased on hearing the words and praised Bhim for his selection.

Bhim then narrated the whole incident to his father. He felt that if Aruna married Bhim, then she would definitely change Ganga's temperament.

The next day, Bhim again went to Gangapur under a pretext and waited for Aruna. As soon as she saw Bhim, she rushed forward and asked him,



“Didn’t your mother like the sari? Did she scold you?”

“No, my mother liked the sari very much. I came here to talk to you on an important matter. I would like to marry you,” said Bhim hesitantly.

“Why do you ask me? You must tell your parents to speak to *my* parents,” replied Aruna.

“That’ll certainly happen. But before that I wanted to know *your* feelings. That’s why I wanted to see you.”

Aruna thought for a moment and then replied: “You’re soft and gentle by nature, and I like you. That’s why I helped you to select the sari.”

Then Bhim told her all about his mother and asked her: “Will you be able

to reform my mother with your cleverness and intelligence?”

Aruna did not need time to take a decision. She remembered Maharishi Vilamb. He had come to Gangapur when he was going round the kingdom. Once he had slipped on the banks of the river and hurt his leg and was unable to stand up. The girls who had come to the river for a bath had made fun of him. Aruna had stopped them from teasing him and helped the rishi to walk again. He had been so pleased with her help that he had said: “I’m satisfied with your service. Ask for any wish.”

Aruna had not been able to decide at that time what she wanted. She had asked for time. The rishi had then said: “Whenever you want anything, close your eyes and utter my name thrice. I’ll appear before you and grant your wish.” He had then left the place.

Aruna narrated the whole incident to Bhim and said: “I think it is not possible for any ordinary person to change your mother. We might have to take the help of Maharishi Vilamb.” Saying so she uttered his name thrice.

The Maharishi appeared before them. He heard the whole story from Aruna and told Bhim: “Come, son, let’s go and meet your mother.”

They reached the village. The rishi entered Bhim’s house and asked Ganga,

who was lying on a cot, “Mother, please give me alms!”

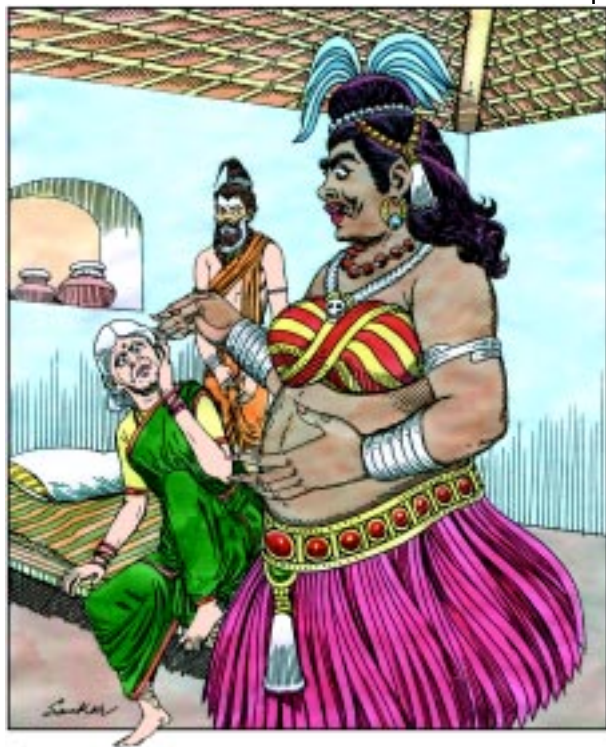
Ganga woke up startled and in a harsh tone said, “You’ve come here to beg. Is this the way you beg?” She then started hurling abusive words at him.

Vilamb said: “Mother, please give me alms if you feel like or ask me to go away. Your harsh words will turn into a demoness and taunt you.”

“I’ve been using abusive language from my childhood. It has become a habit with me. I’ve hurled insults at my parents, my in-laws. I’ve spoken like this to my husband and my son. They’ve all put up with it and are still doing so. I didn’t have any problems with them,” said Ganga in a severe tone.

“If I’ve committed a sin, then your abuses will turn into a curse on me. But if you scold me without any proper reason, the insults will go back to you and become a curse for you. You should know this truth. If you abuse anyone without a proper cause, they will appear as a demoness in front of you!” said Maharishi Vilamb.

Right at that instant, a ferocious looking creature appeared before Ganga. She said to her: “Ganga, I’m the demoness of Abuse. I was supposed to make you a cripple in four years. And there’ll be no cure. But the rishi’s curse has forced me to come now in the form



of a demoness. If you want to destroy someone, tell me now or else I’ll destroy you!”

Ganga was scared. She did not have any other way out, but fall at the Maharishi’s feet. She said: “O holy one! Please forgive me. I’ve committed a sin.”

The Maharishi then said: “The demoness destroys only those who are very close to you. There’s a mango tree at the backyard that you love very much. Ask the demoness to destroy it. The demoness will then leave you.”

Ganga did so and the demoness disappeared immediately. The mango tree at the backyard was not seen again.

The Maharishi said in a soft voice: “Ganga, from now on, do not abuse

anyone without any reason. Whenever you do so, the demoness will appear and punish you. If your behaviour is good, there will be no cause for the demoness to appear again. There's a girl called Aruna in Gangapur. Make her your daughter-in-law. She is an intelligent girl. If you take good care of her, the power of the demoness of Abuse will fade and will disappear in due course of time. Your happiness now rests in your hands."

After a few days, the marriage of Aruna and Bhim was solemnised.

Vetala, after narrating this story, said: "O King, it appears that Aruna had not made good use of the boon granted to her by Maharishi Vilamb. With the help of the boon, she could have become the daughter-in-law of a wealthy person and enjoyed all the riches she wished for. She did not use the boon for herself or for her people. She used it for the benefit of Bhim. I feel that she did not use it wisely. What do you say?

If you know the answer and still keep mum, your head will be blown into pieces."

King Vikram answered: "Any parent would wish his or her daughter to be happily married. I feel that Aruna used the boon to please her parents. Generally, men are supposed to be short-tempered. But Bhim's nature was the opposite. He was patient and had an even temperament. Any girl would have liked to marry a person like that. No drastic changes can come in his nature in the future. So Aruna used her boon to cure her mother-in-law. That would bring peace and happiness in the family. It was done for the well being of the members of her family. Therefore, her decision was neither stupid nor improper."

As soon as King Vikram broke his silence, the corpse disappeared and zoomed off to the ancient tree. The king drew his sword and went after the corpse.



Know Your India

Quiz

Certain places have specialities, which make them popular or famous. Try to identify the places in reference to the peculiarities or the people who made them popular mentioned below:

1. Japan is known as the 'Land of the Rising Sun'. In which part of India do the sun's rays fall first?
2. Which State has the highest percentage of tribal population?
3. One of the States has its own style of dancing. Poet Rabindranath Tagore was responsible for introducing it to the outside world. Which State is this?
4. A State has a large number of Buddhist monasteries which have lent their name to it. Which State?
5. When the British ruled from Delhi, they had a summer capital elsewhere. Which city in which State had this privilege?
6. Which State had the first democratically elected Communist government in the world?
7. The French architect Le Corbusier designed a model city. It is the capital of two States. What is the name of the city? Which are the two States?
8. The Kumbh Mela is held in four different places. Two of these are in the same State. Which State?

(Answers next month)

Answers to January Quiz

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. 'Netaji' Subhas Chandra Bose. | 5. 1905. |
| 2. Mahatma Gandhi coined the word 'satyagraha', meaning desire for good action. Gandhiji adapted it to satyagraha. | 6. 1857. |
| 3. At the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916. | 7. At the Lahore session of the Congress, December 31, 1929. |
| 4. Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal. | 8. In 1928, led by Sir John Simon, to discuss administrative reforms with the Indian leaders. |
| | 9. August 24, 1946. |
| | 10. Bal Gangadhar Tilak. |

A folk tale from Nagaland

Nagaland, a vibrant hilly State, is situated in the northeast corner of our nation. It shares borders with Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in the north, Manipur in the south, Assam in the west, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) in the east.

The State is 16,527 sq km in area with a population of 1,988,636 (2001 census). The State is roughly at an altitude of 1,490m above the sea level.

Nagaland, with its capital at Kohima, became a State on December 1, 1963, and was the 16th State of the Indian union. The main languages spoken here are English, Hindi, and Nagamese.

Saramati, the highest peak in the Naga hill ranges, is at an altitude of 3,877 m above the sea level. Kohima is a hill station known for panoramic views and scenic beauty.

Dimapur, at an altitude of 195 metres above the sea level, is the gateway to the State.

Kohito finds peace

*In the small village of Zunheboto, in Nagaland, lived Kohito. Fourteen year old Kohito was an orphan and badly neglected. The villagers were always busy attending to their own chores. Kohito lived in the *morung* with the other village lads, and though he somehow got his daily food, he got little else. He wanted to learn to make the*



dao, weave baskets, and hunt in the forests, but no one was willing to teach him.

“Go away, young fellow!” the basket weaver would shoo him away whenever Kohito’s shadow fell on his workplace, shutting out light. The boy would wander off, feeling so very frustrated.

One day, he saw young Nedelie sharpening his *dao*. “Will you teach me to make a spear?” he asked.

“Not now, later. I’m not free like you!” said that young man.

This made Kohito very angry. He marched off and parked himself against a clump of bamboos just outside the village. ‘I’m always free and up to no good, am I?’ he thought, clenching his fists. ‘I must do something to win their respect. I must do something that no Naga of this village has done before.’ The thought excited him. He began to think of things to do, things that would earn the gratitude of his fellow villagers.

Just then he heard a song. The girls of the village were passing down the path a little away. They had pots in their *khang* and were on their way to the river that flowed down the hill slope some miles away. It was a long walk, and they sang to while away the time. That gave Kohito an idea. Water!

Water was the biggest problem his village faced. And if he could dig a well, it would save the villagers a lot of



exercise. They would not ignore him then. Kohito decided that he would dig a well right there. But he would not tell the villagers till it was ready because they might only scoff at his ideas.

He began digging. It was a difficult task for someone so young. But Kohito did not lose heart. He dug and dug whenever he could.

Years rolled by and Kohito had grown into a strapping young man by the time he hit water. One day, a jet of fresh water spouted from the ground and splashed into his face, making him gasp. He was thrilled. Water, at last!

In a few days, his well was ready for use. He pulled out his *chungas*, filled it with water, and took a deep draught. When he heard the girls singing on their

Head hunting

The Nagas were long, long ago known for head-hunting. Anyone who did not have a single head to his credit became an object of ridicule and would not easily find a bride! The heads used to be exhibited as a trophy in their houses!



way to the river, he went after them. “Don’t go so far for water,” he said. “Come to my well. The water in it is crystal clear.” At first they did not believe him. But curiosity got the better of them and they followed him. They were amazed to see the cool water rippling in the well.

Soon the whole village got to know of Kohito’s well. All the villagers were impressed. Kohito was now an important man.

But not for long. As Kohito’s fame grew, even the *kinnaras* in their home in the clouds began to frequent the well. Of course, the *kinnara* maidens flew in only at night after the moon rose, and they bathed and romped around the well till daybreak. Naturally, all this activity dirtied the water. Little bits of wings, feathers, flowers and all kinds of other things floated in the water.

The villagers were angry. “Who has

made this well so dirty?” they demanded of Kohito. Poor chap! He did not know, either. But the villagers would not believe him. “Surely you are allowing others to use it. That’s why the well is no longer as clean as it used to be!” they said. “If this continues, we shall throw you out of the village.”

Kohito decided that he simply had to do something about it. It had taken him years to win the respect of the villagers. How could he allow it to die so cheaply?

So, he hid himself one night near the well and waited. Well, the *kinnara* maidens came there as usual. They took off their wings and put them on the ground before plunging into the water. ‘So you’re the culprits!’ thought Kohito. ‘You’re spoiling my name in the village. I’ll teach you all a lesson.’ He sneaked up to where the wings lay, snatched a pair and rushed back into the darkness.

When the first flush of dawn reddened the horizon, the *kinnaras* came out of the well. They fastened their wings and flew away. Only one maiden remained. “Wait for me,” she cried to her friends. “I’ve lost my wings and must search for them.” But her friends did not listen. At last she was left alone, crying.

Kohito now came out of his hiding. “I shall not let you go. Let this be a lesson to your friends not to come back here!” he thundered.

She sobbed and sobbed, and his heart softened. She looked so beautiful and helpless. “Will you marry me?” he asked her. “I shall take good care of you.” She had no options. So she agreed.

Kohito married her and took her back to the village. Together, they built a house for themselves. Many years

Tribes

Nagaland is a land of tribes. Fourteen major tribes have been identified in this State. The most important among them are the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khemungan, Konyak, Lotha, and Phom. Each tribe has distinct traditions and customs, and even dialects. The dress, jewellery, and headgear, too, vary from tribe to tribe. These tribes have now been divided into many sub-tribes.





sing Naga songs, she missed her home among the clouds.

Whenever Kohito went out to work, she would search for her wings. But Kohito had hidden them so well that she could not find them. Where could they be? she wondered one day. Surely in some place which she detested and would not enter. Where would that be? In the hencoop, perhaps. As the thought struck her, she got up hopefully and went to the coop.

The place was full of litter and smelt so bad that she was about to run away. However, when she put her hand into the coop, the chicks set up a great cluck and the mother hen came

passed. But though she learnt to cook beef and meat and rice, and to brew *zutho* and *ruhi*, and weave baskets, and

cackling to peck at her fair hand. But she bravely groped on, and her hand could feel something soft and downy. A

Handicrafts

Much of the traditional Naga carvings and textile designs have head hunting as their motif.

Nagas are known for their wood-carving, bamboo-work, and pottery. Bamboo and cane are available in abundance in the Naga forests. Naturally, the Nagas are expert basket-weavers. They also make shields and mats with bamboo. Necklets, armlets, and leggings are also made of cane.



few tugs and they were out. Her wings! A little dirty and smelly and frayed at the edges, but they were still wings!

She dusted them and fastened them on her back. Without a backward glance, she leapt into the sky and sailed away to her home among the clouds.

When night fell and Kohito returned home, there was no sign of his wife anywhere. He rushed here and there like a mad man and asked everyone in sight, but nobody had seen her. He ran wildly to the coop and groped for the wings. They were gone! Now he knew that he had lost her. He was anguished.

He sat in front of his hut and wept loudly. Suddenly a white crow fluttered down beside him and spoke in a kind voice. "Don't cry, Kohito!" it said. "I saw her flying away. I can take you to her if you want, but you must help me in return."

"Oh, I will, my friend!" promised Kohito eagerly. "Tell me what I must do!"

"Make me a black crow! I'm sick of being white. My brothers have abandoned me because of my strange appearance."

Kohito promised to do so when they had reached the *kinnara* kingdom. Then he got onto the crow's back and off it flew.

Far, far away they went and at last they were there. The *kinnaras* took him

Glossary

Morung: bachelors' dormitory

Dao: a kind of spear

Khang: bamboo basket worn on the shoulder

Chungas: drinking cups made of bamboo

Kinnara: fairy-like beings said to live in the skies

zutho and *ruhi*: rice beer



to his wife's home and she received him warmly. Actually, she herself had just been feeling a little ashamed of the way she had deserted him. "Don't tell me to come back to earth!" she pleaded. "Let us live here in peace and happiness."

Of course, Kohito agreed.

Men of Wit - Tenali Rama



Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagara was holding court one day. Two attendants held a large painting at either end, in full view of the courtiers. It was a portrait of the king in full regalia. After taking a good look at it, the king went back to the throne.

He heard some muffled 'Ahs' and 'Oohs' from the courtiers. "I paid the artist one thousand gold coins!" said the king with a satisfying smile. "What do you think of it?" He looked at the courtiers, awaiting comments.



A courtier seated near the king stood up. "It's very good, your majesty," he remarked with a broad smile. "The portrait has captured your likeness in every detail. Who painted it, your majesty?"

The king gave no answer. He heard "Yes, very good", "Looks so real", and similar remarks. He looked disappointed. "Hey Tenali! Don't you have something to say?" the king asked his favourite courtier.





“But, your majesty, where’s the other side of your face?” said Tenali Rama. “I can make a better painting any day.” The king was angry. “When you look at a painting, you’ve to imagine a lot. Go! And don’t come back without a painting.”

A month later. “Where’s Tenali? Is he still painting?” the king asked. One courtier said, “None of us has seen him painting.” Another stood up. “Can he hold a brush?” Some derisive laughter was heard. Then silence fell as Tenali Rama and two men entered.



Tenali Rama bowed low. “May I have your permission to show my painting?” The king nodded. The two men unfurled a huge scroll. The courtiers craned their necks. The king frowned. “What kind of a painting is this? I can only see the tail of a horse!”



“Your majesty! You’ve to imagine the rest,” said Tenali with a smirk. “The horse has moved forward after eating grass. That’s why its body is outside the painting!”



How well do you know your country and its people? Here are some quaint, some queer, and some interesting facts of Indian life from all over our wide and vast country. This feature will try to take you a little closer to understanding the people of India. Happy reading!

The world's first surgeon

He might have lived way back in the misty past, but he was certainly ahead of his times. Meet Susruta, the world's first ever surgeon, who is known to have performed cataract, caesarean, removal of stones from urinary bladder, and even

cosmetic surgery circa 800 B.C.

While he used animal and plant fibres and hair for sewing up external wounds, it was black ants Susruta used for sewing up the internal parts of the body.

The edges of the wound would be drawn together and black ants placed side by side until their mandibles had closed like clamps around the edges of the wound. When the mandibles of the ants had bitten the edges together, their bodies were separated from their heads and removed. Only the mandibles remained behind in the human body. Strange are the uses of black ants.

Chandamama



Break-dance of Kerala!

What happens when fifty robust men relentlessly stomp and thump away on a wooden platform for a long time? Of course, the poor platform will only collapse! Believe it or not, this is the much eagerly awaited grand finale to a performance of **Chavittu Natakam**, a less-known folk dance form of Kerala.

When the Portuguese landed in Kerala in the 16th century, they brought with them the European opera tradition. This tradition blended with the local Kathakali tradition



to give rise to the dance-drama form known as Chavittu Natakam.

Here stories drawn from the Christian legends and European history were converted to dance-drama and the actors sang their own lines on stage. Like in Kathakali, these dramas mostly ended in a climax of battles and duels, which often brought as many as fifty men upstage for the grand battle. And if the platform, usually made of very strong wood, did not break under the thumping feet of the fifty odd energetic dancers, the performance was considered a failure!

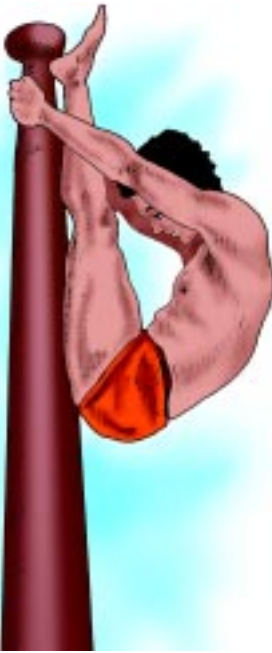
Cool Kashmiris

Brr...r, you are in Kashmir and can't bear the cold of winter! You wonder how the Kashmiris look so cool (or so warm, that is) about the weather. How do they manage those warm smiles and glowing



looks? The secret is in the *angithi* they hold under their clothes! The *angithi* is a small earthen pot with live coal in it. It is placed in a small cane basket and the Kashmiris strap this on under their clothes at the waist. And that's how they spread the warmth around!

Try Mallakhamb!



The game of Mallakhamb has been mentioned in the ancient literature of the Chalukya times in the 10th century. Though it seemed to have died away after that, it was revived by Peshwa Baji Rao II in the 19th century. Today, various forms of Mallakhamb are played and national level contests, too, are held.

Mallakhamb is an ancient game played in India, especially in Maharashtra. This game, which is a kind of gymnastics, tests the suppleness, alertness, and physical fitness of players. A long pole is fixed on the ground and the players twist and turn and do various kinds of exercises while balancing on the pole.

February 2002



Nothing fishy here!



Fish in paddy fields? Does that sound fishy to you? But it is a great system. Ask the Apatanis. This tribal community of Arunachal Pradesh has evolved this unique system of fish-cum-paddy cultivation. They introduce fish in flooded terraced paddy fields just when the rice plants are strong enough to withstand the gnawing by the fish. And they introduce tiny creatures and plants for the fish to feed on. So when the rice is ready for harvest, the fish is ready, too!

Festivals of India

Vasant Panchami

The coming of the Spring season is celebrated with great fervour all over India as Vasant Panchami. The festival falls on *panchami* or the fifth day of *Magh Shukla* (fifth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Magh, January-February). In eastern India, the day is celebrated as Saraswati Puja. Goddess Saraswati is the personification of Knowledge – arts, sciences, and crafts. She also represents *shakti*, creativity and inspiration.

In West Bengal, idols of Saraswati are worshipped on this day. Books and music instruments are placed in front of the idol. On this day, children are not



expected to engage themselves in study! The idols are later immersed in the sea or a river. Students open their books only the next day after offering prayers. On the occasion of Saraswati Puja, even little girls in this State wear saris!

Goddess Saraswati is worshipped with flowers, especially the *basaka* (*justicia gendarussa*) and the yellow *ganda* or marigold, which represents this season.

In north India, especially Punjab, the kite festival marks Vasant Panchami. Kite-flying competitions are organised on this day.





Vasant is the season when nature is at its beautiful best and bountiful. In the northern parts of the country, the fields are filled with bright yellow mustard in

full bloom. To mark the blooming of the mustard, and to participate in the joys of Spring, on this day, people wear yellow-coloured clothes.



Carnaval

*I*n February, the air and the entire atmosphere in Goa is charged with ringing laughter and music. This is because of the three day annual festival known as Carnaval. It is time for fun and frolic.

The Goans believe that long, long ago, King Momo of Goa ordered that his subjects should not work on the days of the carnival. He declared: "I, King Momo, hereby forbid anyone in the kingdom of Goa from doing anything

sensible for the duration of the carnival." Seems like a fun-loving king!

Groups of singers and dancers perform all through the day on colourfully decorated floats. The floats are of different designs and are constructed specially for this occasion. The revellers wear funny and colourful masks.

Small plays, mostly based on historical events, are written for the occasion. They are called *felos* and are





performed on the floats, too. Traditionally, only men perform all the roles in the plays staged during the carnival. These plays are generously interspersed with music and dance.

The men put on thick layers of make-up, weird and colourful costumes, and traditional headgear. They rehearse for the *felos* months ahead of the carnival. The plays start early in the morning and continue right

through the night. Throngs of people accompany the performers from one place to another.

When the Portuguese ruled in Goa, the carnival was called *porco e brutal*, meaning 'piggish and brutal'! In the later part of A.D. 1700, the carnival celebrations consisted mostly of mock battles in the streets. The battle was fought with rotten eggs and paper bags filled with flour or chalk powder!



Dosmoche



*D*osmoche is an ancient tradition that is still followed by the people of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir. Every year in February, the Leh Palace comes alive with the music of drums. On this day, lamas from various monasteries wear masks and perform a dance-drama. The lamas prepare, consecrate, and then destroy the customary offering as a sacrifice.

The main offering is the *do* or the thread crosses. They are prepared by the lamas of the Takthok Monastery, who are considered experts in astrology, *tantra*, and other similar subjects. It is believed that when the lamas perform the requisite rite and chant the prescribed *mantra*, the offering is blessed with the power to trap the evil spirits, hungry ghosts, and demoniac forces.



Ten different kinds of offerings of various sizes complement the main offering. They are then taken through the main streets and bazaar in a procession. Musicians and the monastic orchestra lead the way, followed by black hat dancers, the lamas, and the local people dressed in their finery.

When the procession reaches the end of the town, it comes to a halt and the offerings are burnt and destroyed with great fanfare. This is done to wish away all the evil, and protect themselves from natural calamities and disasters in the following year. Nowadays, a number of folk dances are also performed as interludes.



Ash Wednesday

*A*sh Wednesday falls on February 20 this year. On this day, Christians wear a little cross of ash on their foreheads as a symbol of repentance for all their sins, big and small. The priest or the cleric makes a mark on the foreheads of all the assembled people before the beginning of the mass.

The ashes used on this day are made from the palm fronds blessed on the Palm Sunday the previous year. The ashes are sprinkled with holy water and fumigated with incense.

For all Christians, it marks the forty days that Lord Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before he began to preach.

It is believed that when he was 32 years old, Jesus got himself baptized by John the Baptist and then fasted for 40 days before he began preaching and healing.

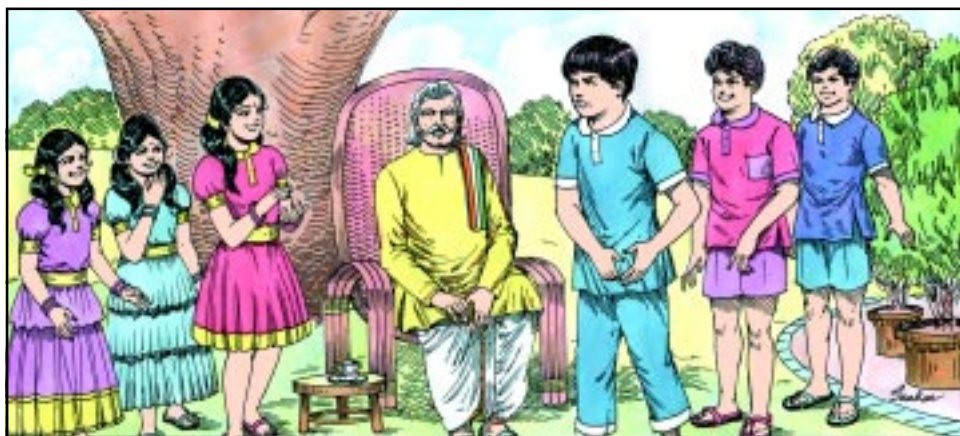


Ash Wednesday thus marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of special purification and penance. During this time, Christians abstain from eating meat. This goes on for 40 days and culminates in the festival of Easter.

Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages

25. The story behind the ocean of stories



Sandip was delighted that the drama *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* they staged on the occasion of the Annual Day of his school was a thumping success. In his role of Sage Kanva, he did very well.

"I had already learnt so much about our ancient sages from Grandpa that the character of Kanva did not seem unfamiliar to me at all," said Sandip.

"I bet you would have done far better in the role of Durvasa," commented Chameli.

"Shut up!" Sandip reacted angrily.

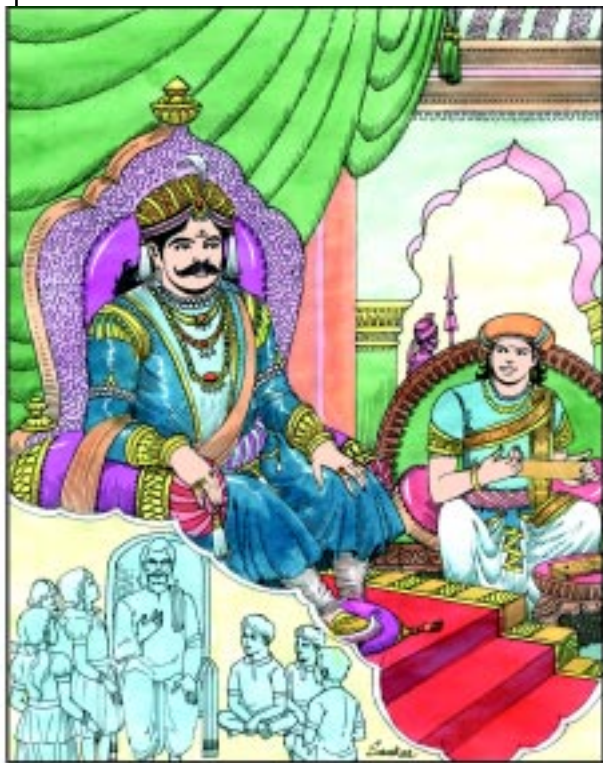
"Thanks a lot for endorsing my

opinion," Chameli said, clapping her hands.

All of them, including a few friends of theirs, who were regular visitors to their house on Sundays, laughed.

"Isn't it surprising that people should enjoy a play so well centuries after it had been written?" observed Sandip's friend, Partha. "I hope, Grandpa enjoyed it as much as King Vikramaditya had once upon a time!" he added.

"I did enjoy it very much, no doubt, my boy, but King Vikram must have enjoyed it more. Staging a play was a



memorable event those days. The king could listen to the dialogues in Sanskrit, the language in which it was written. Something of its charm would be missing when translated into English, just as something of Shakespeare's charm would go when translated into Sanskrit," said Professor Devnath.

"Grandpa, was it the same Vikramaditya who was the patron of the great Kalidasa?" asked Chameli.

"Do you read of only one Vikramaditya in history?" queried Grandpa. "There were several monarchs bearing that title. It means 'as powerful as the sun'. Of them, one was Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty who had his capital at Ujjain. He

belonged to 4th century A.D. However, there was surely another mighty Vikramaditya who lived in the 1st century B.C. A new era, named the Vikram Era after him, was introduced to celebrate his reign. This era began in 58 B.C. But history does not say anything about that Vikramaditya. Kalidasa must have been a court poet of that Vikram well known in his own time but unknown to us, or a court poet of Chandragupta II."

"But what about the king in the series of stories famous as Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire?" asked Chameli again.

"Well, my child, that makes me think there was a king called Vikramaditya at Ujjain who lived in the 1st century A.D. The author of the Vikram and Vampire stories, Gunadhya, lived in the 1st century. He must have been greatly influenced by the fame and prowess of the king," said Professor Devnath.

"But, Grandpa, we were told by our teacher that the Vikram and Vampire stories were written by Somadeva!" said Sandip.

"Neither your teacher nor I am wrong. Somadeva was the author of the widely known book, the *Kathasaritsagara*. The Vikram-Vetala tales you are referring to are a part of this work. But the *Kathasaritsagara* itself is a part of another work, the *Brihat Katha*, written a thousand years before



Somadeva, by Gunadhya. There must have been many more interesting stories in that great work, a greater part of which was lost to us.”

“But how did that happen?” asked Partha.

“That’s a sad story,” said the professor, and he narrated it:

The original name of the city now known as Paithan was Pratisthan. More than two thousand years ago, it was ruled by a dynasty of kings known as the Satavahanas. Gunadhya was a scholar in the court of one of them.

It so happened that the king once decided to learn Sanskrit. Gunadhya told him that it would take him a few years to master the language. But another scholar claimed that he could teach the king Sanskrit in just six months.

“If you could do that, I would quit writing in Sanskrit!” said Gunadhya in a huff.

Indeed, the king was a studious young man, and after six months it was proved that he had learnt Sanskrit quite well. Gunadhya not only stopped writing in Sanskrit, but decided to leave the city.

“My good friend, if leave you must, let your time be put to good use,” said the king. “I suggest that you go on a tour of the whole country. Collect all the stories told by the people in different parts. You can write them down in the common man’s language.”

Gunadhya accepted the suggestion. He travelled from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, met hundreds of people, and listened to thousands of stories. He put them under different sections. Years

passed. At last he returned to Pratisthan with a cartload of palm-leaf manuscripts. He expected a grand reception from the king. However, he was cool for some unknown reason. Feeling deeply wounded, Gunadhya carried his manuscripts to the top of a hill. It was a cloudy evening. He lit a fire. In the light of that fire, he read aloud the first section of his collection. It was all about Nature. The clouds became playful and the wind blew sweetly as he read on. But when he hurled the leaves into the fire, the wind grew violent and there were thunderclaps above.

Then he read aloud the second section of the stories on animals, birds, and trees. Several animals came pressing around him and birds alighted on the trees on the hill, listening to him. Then, when he threw that part of his collection into the fire, the animals howled and

growled, the birds flapped their wings, and the trees leaned down to extinguish the flames, but in vain.

This went on until someone ran to the king and informed him of what was happening. The king himself came rushing in and embraced the scholar and put out the fire. By then four out of the five sections of the total collection had been reduced to ashes. Somadeva, who was a scholar in the court of King Ananta of Kashmir, translated them into Sanskrit in the 11th century. In their old age, the king and queen were a sad couple because of their son's bad conduct. Somadeva's stories gave them great solace.

"How many instructive stories are there behind these stories!" exclaimed Chameli, and all the rest echoed her sentiment.

- Visvavasu





The Story of Ganesa

The Devas of the heavens and the Asuras of the nether world began churning the Ocean of Milk; it brought out *Amrit* or ambrosia. If the Asuras were to drink it, they would acquire indomitable strength, and the Devas feared there would not be any end to the harm the Asuras would do to them. So, they approached Lord Vishnu, who assumed the form of an enchantress, Mohini. She hoodwinked the Asuras and managed to distribute the divine drink among the Devas alone. No wonder, they became arrogant as they had now become immortal.

When the Asuras realised that they had been cheated, they decided to teach the Devas a lesson. One of them, Tarakasura, began to meditate on Lord Brahma. The Lord was pleased over his

tapas and appeared before the Asura leader, and asked what boon he wanted. "Let me be immortal!" said Tarakasura.

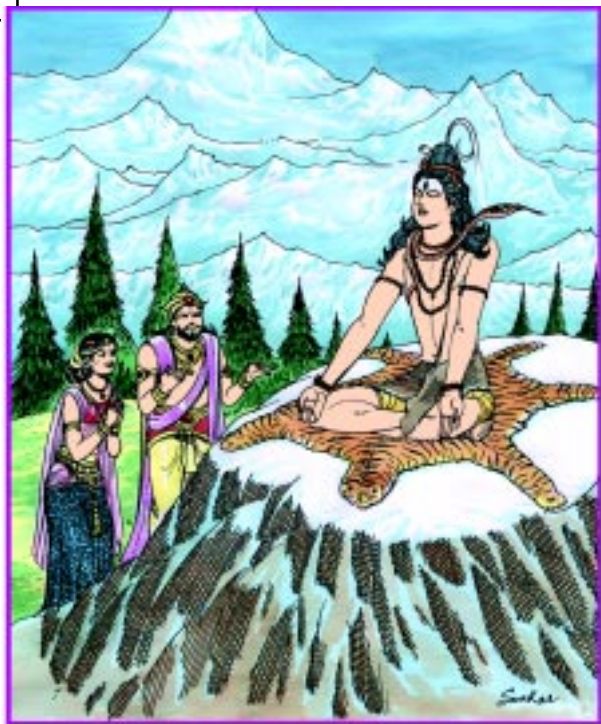
"No mortal can avoid death," said Brahma, "so you may ask for anything else."

"In which case, please bless me that I shall die only at the hands of a son of Siva," said Tarakasura. The boon was granted.

Around that time, Siva's consort Dakshayini had ended her life by jumping into the fire at the yaga being conducted by her father, King Daksha. Siva was beset with uncontrollable grief. He wandered among the peaks of the Himalayas seeking peace to his troubled mind. He then sat in deep meditation.

Meanwhile, Tarakasura led a

2. The marriage of Parvati and Siva



formidable army of *rakshasas* and challenged the Devas to a fight. The two sides fought a fierce war which witnessed the demons inflicting an inglorious defeat on the Devas. They ran to Lord Brahma and pleaded with him that he took back the boon granted to Tarakasura. Brahma explained to them why he had to grant that boon to Tarakasura and told them that they all would go to Lord Vishnu for advice and help. They then proceeded to Vaikuntha, the abode of Vishnu.

After listening to the Devas, Vishnu said: “Dakshayini has now taken birth as Parvati, daughter of King Himavan. You must ensure that she is married to Siva.”

The Devas sent Narada as their emissary to Himavan who was carried away by Narada’s suggestion that Parvati deserved nobody other than Lord Siva for a husband. Himavan then went up to the Lord who was still in deep meditation. After paying his obeisance to Siva, Himavan said: “O Mahadeva! Please permit me to send my daughter Parvati to look after your needs and comforts.”

There was no response from Lord Siva, who continued his meditation. Himavan thought, as the Lord had not indicated any objection, he must have accepted his prayer. So, he went back and sent Parvati to look after Siva.

She was just waiting for this moment, as she had already started worshiping the Lord in her heart, and she had also listened to Narada’s praise of Siva. She had, therefore, decided that she would not marry anyone other than the Lord Himself. Parvati lost no time in reaching the presence of Lord Siva.

She engaged herself in chores like clearing and cleaning the precincts where Siva was sitting in meditation and gathering fruits and leaves that he liked to eat. Besides, she also sang songs extolling the virtues of the Lord. This daily routine continued without any hindrance or a halt.

Siva never even for once opened his

eyes to look at Parvati who, without even a blink, waited for the Lord to open his eyes and take a look at her.

Now, the Devas led by Indra were marking their time to see that Parvati and Siva were married and Parvati bore him a son. Indra sought the help of Kamadeva, the god of Love. At first he was not willing to extend any help, but when he realised that what he would do would benefit the Devas, he gave his assent.

Kamadeva and his consort Rati flew in their chariot to where Siva sat in meditation. Kamadeva carried the arrow of Love with him. The moment the divine couple alighted on the Himalayan peak, the flowers around blossomed and the whole place was enveloped by all kinds of sweet fragrance. The birds were alerted and they chirped melodious songs. Bumble bees encircled the place whirring softly. Peacocks spread their gorgeous feathers and began to dance. Lord Siva was disturbed in his meditation and opened his eyes. And what he saw was Parvati in front engrossed in her prayers to Siva Himself.

This was the moment Kamadeva was waiting for. He was standing behind a tree. From there he sent the flower covered arrow of Love which hit Siva's chest. The Lord looked around to find



out who had sent the arrow at Him. He saw Kamadeva hiding behind the tree. Siva was angry; He opened his powerful Third Eye. The fire beam that emerged from the eye went straight at Kamadeva who was reduced to ashes in a trice.

Now that His concentration was broken, Lord Siva got up, still furious, and proceeded to His abode in Mount Kailas. Rati wept over the ashes of her lord, Kamadeva. She could not console herself and decided to end her life in the same fire that had taken the life of her lord.

At that moment, the Devas rushed in to prevent her from taking her life. They consoled her, saying that soon after Siva and Parvati were married, the



Lord's anger would subside and He himself would make Kamadeva come back to life. Rati now sat down guarding the ashes of Kamadeva.

Parvati till then had believed that she was very beautiful, and was confident that one look at her and Siva would readily agree to marry her. True, the Lord had opened his eyes and had looked at her as well. But there was no hint that He had noticed her. Moreover, He had also left the place, full of anger. Parvati, therefore, decided that she would meditate on Siva. She began an intense *tapas*. She stopped eating any food, except leaves. After some days she gave up that also. Her friends now called her Aparna.

After reaching Kailas, the effect of the arrow sent by Kamadeva slowly faded. However, Lord Siva began to feel the intensity of Parvati's *tapas*. The Lord now had a change of heart. He decided to present Himself before Parvati. He changed his dress and appearance and stood before Parvati. But to his surprise he found that her mind was not wavering and it was fixed on Siva, and Siva alone. He went up to the seven Rishis called Saptarishis and requested them to go to King Himavan and discuss His marriage with his daughter.

When the Saptarishis informed Himavan of Siva's proposal, his joy knew no bounds. He told them that the marriage would be performed soon on an auspicious date. Lord Siva, accompanied by his entourage, reached Himavan's palace in time for the ceremony. Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, Indra, and the Devas in full strength proceeded to attend the ceremony. Also present were Narada, the Saptarishis, and many other rishis and munis.

Parvati was hoping that Siva would come dressed as a bridegroom. She herself was bedecked in glittering ornaments and looked beautiful, as she entered the bridal *pandal*. Himavan went through the rituals meticulously and performed the wedding of Parvati and

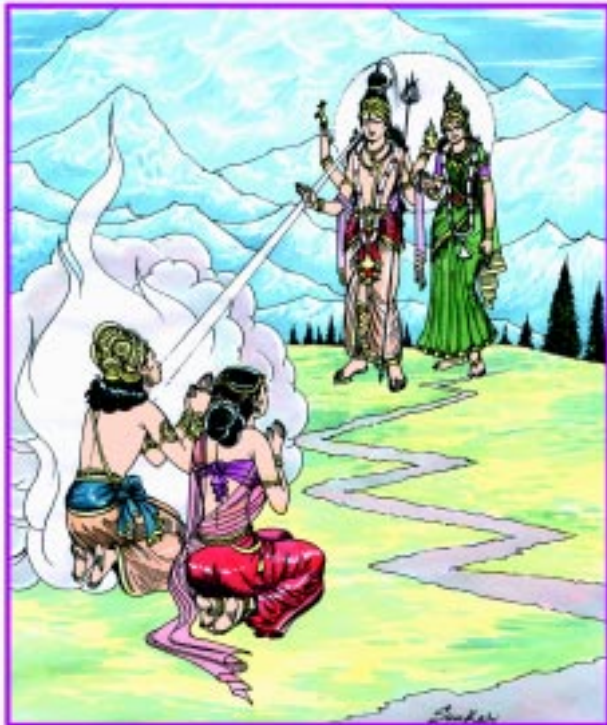
Siva in the presence of that august audience. The couple received the blessings of everybody present.

Viswakarma, the architect of the Devas, had put up a beautiful palace for the stay of the newlyweds. On their way to the palace, they went past Rati who was still guarding the ashes of Kamadeva. They went near her and blessed her to enjoy a long life as a married woman. Siva then opened his Third Eye from which emitted cool rays which fell on the ashes. They brought back Kamadeva to life.

“O Devi!” he said turning to Rati. “Your husband has regained his life. However, you alone can see him and none else will be able to see his form. That, in a way, is good for him, because no one will then do any harm to him. Moreover, nobody will be able to escape from his arrows whenever he aims them at anybody. You will be able to see him always. This is the boon I grant you.”

As they proceeded towards the palace prepared for their stay, they were escorted by the invitees. The wives of munis led by Arundhati, wife of sage Vasishtha, performed *arati* for the couple as they stepped into the palace.

Viswakarma now brought a wooden frame covered with a cloth. He said: “This is a unique picture. It has two



figures; one rivalling the other in beauty, and we are not able to decide who is more beautiful!” He then removed the cloth.

The wooden frame had encased a lovely mirror. As they looked into the mirror, the faces of Parvati and Siva bloomed with a smile. Sage Narada interrupted: “Your smile does not provide an answer to Viswakarma’s question!”

Lord Siva smiled again and said: “No doubt, Parvati is more beautiful!”

Parvati, too, gave out a smile and said: “Who can say my lord with the three eyes is not more beautiful? In fact, he is without a match!”

After this interlude, the invitees one

after the other bade farewell to the bridal couple. Soon they were left alone in the palace. As they went round, they saw a painting on one of the walls. It depicted two elephants facing each other. They had raised their front legs, while their hind legs struck a dancing pose. Behind the elephants was a pond in which a lotus was in full bloom.

Parvati and Siva were fascinated by the painting. They remained looking at it and appreciating the details for a long time. Suddenly, a glow arose from a point between the elephants. The glow got enlarged and in the centre there appeared Vighneswara. The glow surrounded his figure.

Though Vighneswara had the face of an elephant, it had a divine brightness. The eyes appeared so peaceful and happy. The body had a paunch which gave it a perfect shape. The hands were

held up as if they were showering blessings.

Parvati could not take her eyes off the figure in the painting. On seeing Parvati's face, Siva was extremely happy.

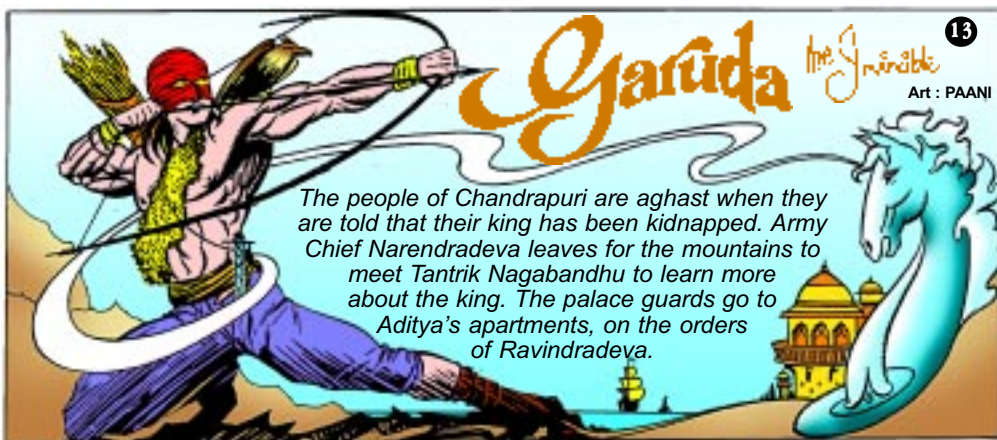
The figure now turned to the couple: "I am Vighneswara. I remove all obstacles. I am also Vinayaka, with no peers. I am Ganapati, the leader of the ganas. You will soon be blessed with a child. I will be born as that child of yours. He will kill Tarakasura."

Parvati was about to take Vighneswara into her arms, but the figure disappeared. This brought wonderment to both Parvati and Siva. They could not forget the event while they spent a wonderful time in that palace made for them by Viswakarma.

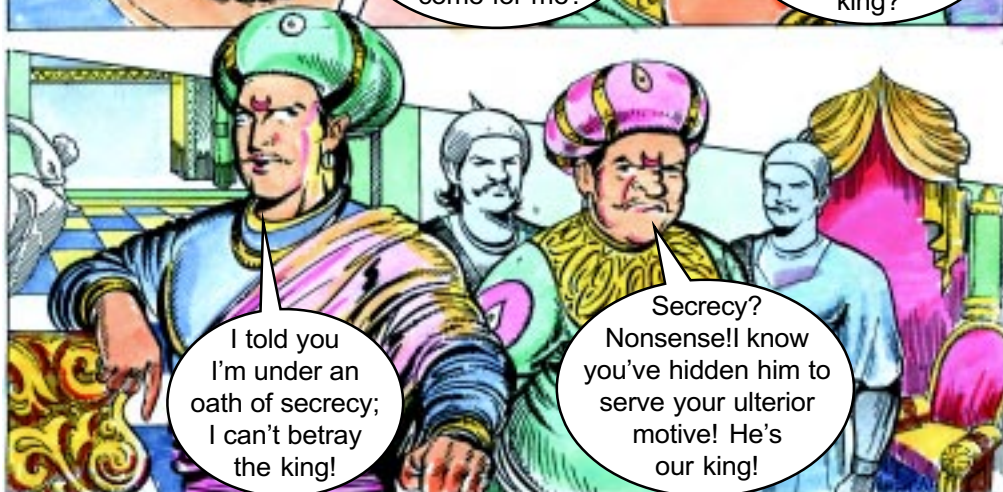
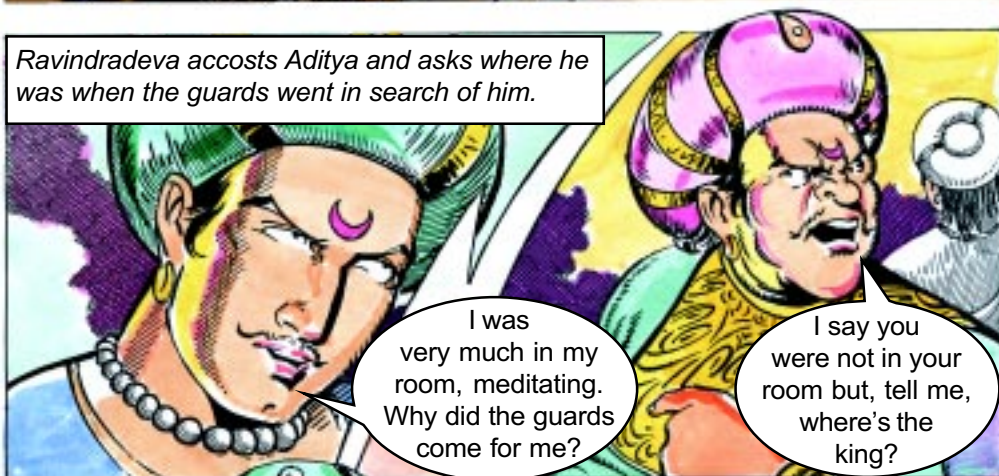
Were they aware of the tragedy that was overtaking the world at that time?

(To continue)





Ravindradeva accosts Aditya and asks where he was when the guards went in search of him.



Ravindraadeva draws his sword and challenges Aditya who is unarmed.

In a lightning action, Aditya grabs a spear from the hands of a guard.

I know how to deal with people like you.

Drop that sword!

Don't kill me, Aditya!

Aditya picks up Ravindraadeva's sword and threatens the guards. They run away. Aditya closes the door from inside.

Ravindradeva is shocked beyond belief. He looks helpless.

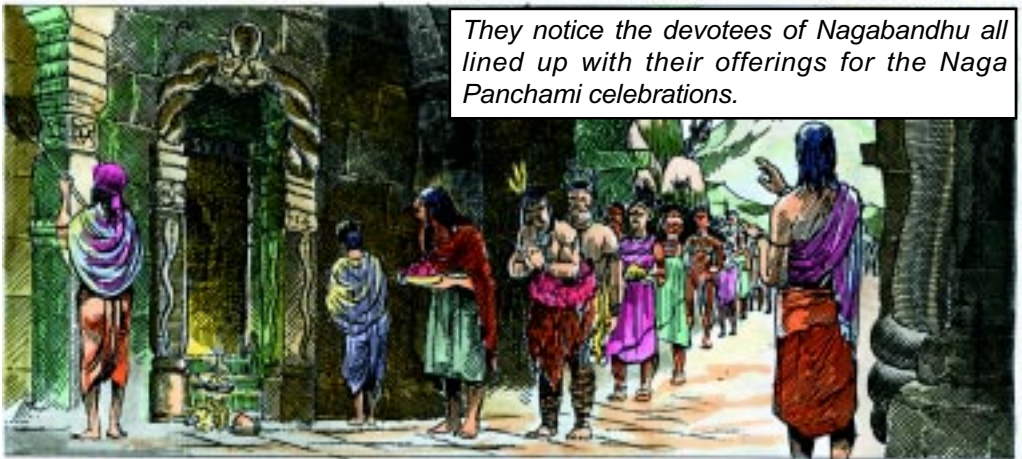


The palace guards are alerted; they try to break open the door.





After two days of travel through mountains, Narendradeva and his men reach the precincts of an ancient temple.



They notice the devotees of Nagabandhu all lined up with their offerings for the Naga Panchami celebrations.



A disciple of the Tantrik approaches the strange visitors.

Please get down and join the line. Our Master is strict about discipline. His instructions must be followed.

(To continue)

A Hodja story

One less than a hundred

Naseeruddin Hodja woke up early in the morning. He quickly got ready for his prayers. He prayed loudly. "Allah! Please give me a hundred gold coins. I do not want ninety-nine; only a hundred will do."

Every day, the Hodja knelt in his courtyard, looked towards the sky, and uttered his prayers. The Hodja's neighbour, a rich merchant, watched him curiously day after day. One day, he thought he would see if the Hodja meant what he said. So, the next day, he put 99 gold coins into a bag and waited quietly behind the chimney on his terrace. Soon the Hodja came into his courtyard and uttered his prayers as usual. The man immediately threw the bag of coins down into the courtyard. The Hodja eagerly picked up the bag and joyfully counted the coins, thanking God all the time.

When he finished counting and found only 99 coins, he thought deeply. He had not asked God to give him the coins all at once. So, he said loudly: "Oh merciful Allah! You have answered my prayer partly. Maybe you did not have all the



hundred coins today. It does not matter at all; you can give me the last coin tomorrow."

Then the Hodja put the 99 coins back into the bag and went inside. The merchant was now at a loss. The Hodja seemed quite determined to keep the 99 gold coins.

A little later in the day, the merchant went quietly to the Hodja and said:

“Good sir, many greetings. Please give me back my bag of gold coins. I threw it down only as a joke. I’m very sorry.”

“You surely must be joking, sir. You’ve never given any money to me,” was the Hodja’s answer.

“Come, come, learned sir, you know very well that I’m not as learned as you are. Every day, I used to hear your prayers for a hundred coins. I threw down that bag of coins at your feet. I



wanted to see what you would do if there were only 99 coins. A joke is a joke, but now it is over, so give me my bag of coins and we will say no more about it.”

“I certainly prayed to God to give me a hundred gold coins. And in his mercy he gave them to me,” said the Hodja. “They are surely a reward for my true and devoted prayers. They are

mine and no man can take them away from me. I can’t understand, dear neighbour, how you can say so certainly that you gave them to me.”

No matter how patiently the merchant explained the matter to him, the Hodja would not budge from his stand. He said the money was his and had come to him as an answer to his prayers.

The merchant was most upset. “I shall take you to court for robbing me of my money,” he said.

The Hodja stroked his beard slowly and said: “I’m most willing to go to court with you.”

The merchant was keen to set off at once. Then the Hodja said: “I’m not as young as I once was and cannot walk all that way.”

The merchant wanted to get his hands on his money as soon as possible. So, he went into his house and brought a sturdy donkey.

“Here, you can ride this donkey. I’ll find myself another one. But let’s leave at once,” he said.

Now the Hodja found another excuse. “How can I appear before the judge so shabbily dressed? It would be very disrespectful.”

The merchant was set on taking the Hodja to court, so he went back home and brought a new silken dress and a fur coat for the Hodja to wear. The Hodja examined the clothes and was satisfied.

At the court, the judge asked them what the matter was. The merchant indignantly told him the story. The Hodja stood stroking his beard all the time.

After the merchant had finished, the Hodja cleared his throat once and spoke to the judge: "Your Excellency, this man is my neighbour. Sometimes he does stand on his terrace and watch me pray. He could have seen me counting the gold coins that God gave me today. He is now trying to be smart and wants to lay his hands on the money."

The merchant protested and said: "Believe me, my Lord, the coins are mine. I never tell a lie. I did hear him pray for a hundred coins, and only a hundred coins, daily, so I threw them down into the courtyard to see what he would do if he got one coin less than he prayed for."

"My Lord, I told you he is smart. He often does things like this. Now he will say that the clothes I'm wearing are also his," said the Hodja.

"But they're mine!" cried the merchant raising his voice. "I gave them to him to wear to court today. The fur coat and the silk dress, they are all mine!"

"You see, my Lord," broke in the Hodja shrugging his shoulders. "Next, he will say that the donkey I'm riding is also his. Everyone knows that I've my own donkey."

"The donkey is also mine. He said he didn't have one," shouted the merchant, now beside himself with rage.

The judge could take it no more. "I've never known such a rogue. How dare you accuse an honest and respectable man? Complaint dismissed! Take him away," he declared.

The guards at the court at once pushed the merchant out.

The Hodja went home in his fine



silken clothes, happily riding on the donkey. Back home he found the woebegone merchant sitting on his doorstep.

The Hodja said, not unkindly: "Now take back your donkey and the dress and the gold coins, neighbour, but remember the lesson you've learnt today. Don't at any time tempt an honest man to break his word."

Women who made history

It was a daring 16-year-old girl who freed her father's kingdom from foreign invaders. Princess Tarabai was the daughter of Rao Surtan of Thoda.



Surtan was living in exile after Thoda was conquered by Lilla. Tara eagerly listened to her father recounting the brave deeds of their ancestors.



The Afghans outnumbered the Thoda army. Surtan tried to recapture his kingdom, but failed. Lilla spent a life of pleasure, while the people suffered oppression and misery.



As Tara grew up, her agony was more than her father's. She mastered all techniques of fighting, like hitting a target while riding a horse.



Tara's companions often taunted her for her behaviour as unbecoming of a princess.



Tarabai's beauty and brawn were soon the talking point among some of the Rajput princes who sought her hand. Her father broached the subject of marriage with her.



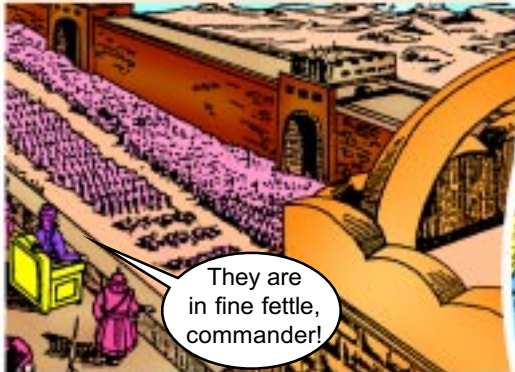
No prince was willing to risk his life fighting a battle with Lilla, except the Prince of Mewar. He took up the challenge.



Tarabai was impressed with the Mewar prince. Together they started accompanied by some 500 chosen soldiers.



At that time, some festivities were going on at the Thoda capital. Lilla, seated on the terrace of the fort, was watching a procession of his soldiers.



It was evening. Prithviraj and Tarabai entered the gates and joined in the procession. Soon they were riding in front of Lilla. He saw the strangers.



As Prithviraj and Tarabai galloped away, the Afghan soldiers were alerted. The gate-keeper sent an elephant to block their way. Tarabai slashed away its trunk with her sword.



The Afghans followed them, but they were demoralised after the fall of their leader. They were routed. The Thoda throne was restored to Rao Surtan. Tarabai and Prithviraj were married.



Calls for a lot of courage!

- ❁ Reader **Jyotirmayi Devee** of Bhubaneswar wants to know the meaning of “to beard the lion in his den”.

The meaning is simple, though the actual act may not be that simple! Suppose you are employed in a firm and you feel you are harassed by your employer. You may generally be scared of your boss, but try muster enough courage and challenge him in his office. If you succeed in convincing him that you are not to be blamed or you did not deserve punishment, resulting in his tendering an apology, you can be said to have bearded a lion in his den!

- ❁ Reader **Shyamlal Gupta** of Rohini, Delhi, wants to know the meaning of the expression ‘brownie-point’.

When someone does something and gets credit for doing it, he or she can be said to have earned a brownie-point; though strictly speaking, it is a commendation of little significance!

- ❁ Who is a *grenzganger*? asks **Sreekumara Menon** of Chennai.

That is someone who crosses a national or political border, especially from the Communist countries to the West.

- ❁ What is meant by the idiom ‘to shoot the breeze’? asks **Itishree Biswal** of Durgapur.

If anyone were to talk nonsense or exaggerate the truth, he or she can be described as shooting the breeze, meaning conversing aimlessly. Shall we say ‘Itishree likes to shoot the breeze, so don’t take everything she says seriously’; we can also take it with a pinch of salt!

- ❁ Reader **Mrutyunjay** of Aul, Orissa, has a doubt: Is it correct to say, “I am a boy, aren’t I?”

Better say: “I am a boy, ain’t I?”— ‘Ain’t’ is used in non-standard spoken English instead of ‘am I not’ ‘aren’t’, or ‘isn’t’.

The puzzling prisoner of the Bastille

*M*any years ago, a fisherman was walking past an old castle by the river.

Suddenly, out of a small window, came a flying plate swishing through the air. It struck the ground right in front of the fisherman.

He was surprised. He picked it up. It shone like gold! His joy knew no bounds, because he was poor and this piece of gold could change his destiny.

It suddenly dawned on him that the castle was no ordinary one. It was the dreaded prison of France called the Bastille. 'Who could have the thrown the plate out of it?' he wondered. 'A prisoner? What did he want?'

The bewildered fisherman examined the plate. Indeed, on it was a scribbled message!

'It would be wiser to surrender the plate to the prison authority. For, if by chance, it is found on me, I might get into trouble. I shall, therefore, return it. Who knows, this act of mine may not fetch me a reward!' he thought prudently

and headed for the castle.

He met the governor of the prison and gave the plate to him. He turned pale as he took the plate in his hands. And when he looked at it closely, he began to tremble and shiver.

"Mister! Have you read what is written on it?" he asked in a menacing tone.

"Sir, I don't know how to read or write," replied the other in a matter of fact way.

But the governor would not believe him that easily. He ordered the fisherman to be put behind bars. Later, only after verifying that the stranger was indeed illiterate did he set him free.

Alas, the only reward with which the poor fisherman returned home was his life.

Why did the governor not want anybody to know what was written on the plate?

It was perhaps the last desperate attempt by the mysterious prisoner of the Bastille to inform the world of his identity. He had scratched with a knife whatever he wished to tell about himself



on the plate and thrown it outside. But unfortunately his plan failed.

Who was this strange prisoner? Known as the Man in the Iron Mask, he was a captive of King Louis XVI of France.

But he was no ordinary prisoner. He always wore an iron mask. According to some, the mask was in fact made of black velvet fastened at the neck by iron clasps. Never, not even once in more than 30 years, had anyone around dared to utter his true name. Nor did they or the public have a chance to see his face. Two armed musketeers always stood guard over him. They had strict orders to shoot him dead, should he remove his mask and begin to talk about himself.

Perhaps, a part of the mask was removed only whenever the prisoner was given food. Otherwise he slept with the mask on. Eventually he died in 1703 *with the mask on* and was buried, again with the mask on, but under a false name.

The philosopher and writer Voltaire, who was imprisoned in the Bastille in 1717, claimed that he had spoken to other prisoners and jailers who had known and served this unknown prisoner. Later, in 1738 he seems to have written to a friend: "I am fairly well informed on the adventure of the man in the iron mask." This is supposed to be the very first mention of February 2002

the "iron mask", and from then on the myth took strong roots.

There followed the world-famous novel *The Man in the Iron Mask* by Alexander Dumas, and the age-old legend became immensely popular. It has inspired hosts of plays, movies, and music to this day.

Usually, important people who had fallen out of favour with the king were imprisoned in the Bastille. But, who could have been this mysterious prisoner condemned by Louis XVI to spend his life masked and in solitude?



It is reported that the governor of the place where the prisoner was lodged at first addressed him as “My Prince”. Even the prison officials and the guards, in the presence of the masked captive, took off their caps and remained standing until the prisoner asked them to relax.

Was the man in the iron mask, as many believe, then the real heir to the throne of France? Was he the prince who should have become the true Louis XVI? A cunning ploy made his half-brother ascend the throne. He was sent away from his land at a tender age. But finally when he returned, the king’s men arrested him. A mask was at once thrown over his face before people even had a chance to see it.

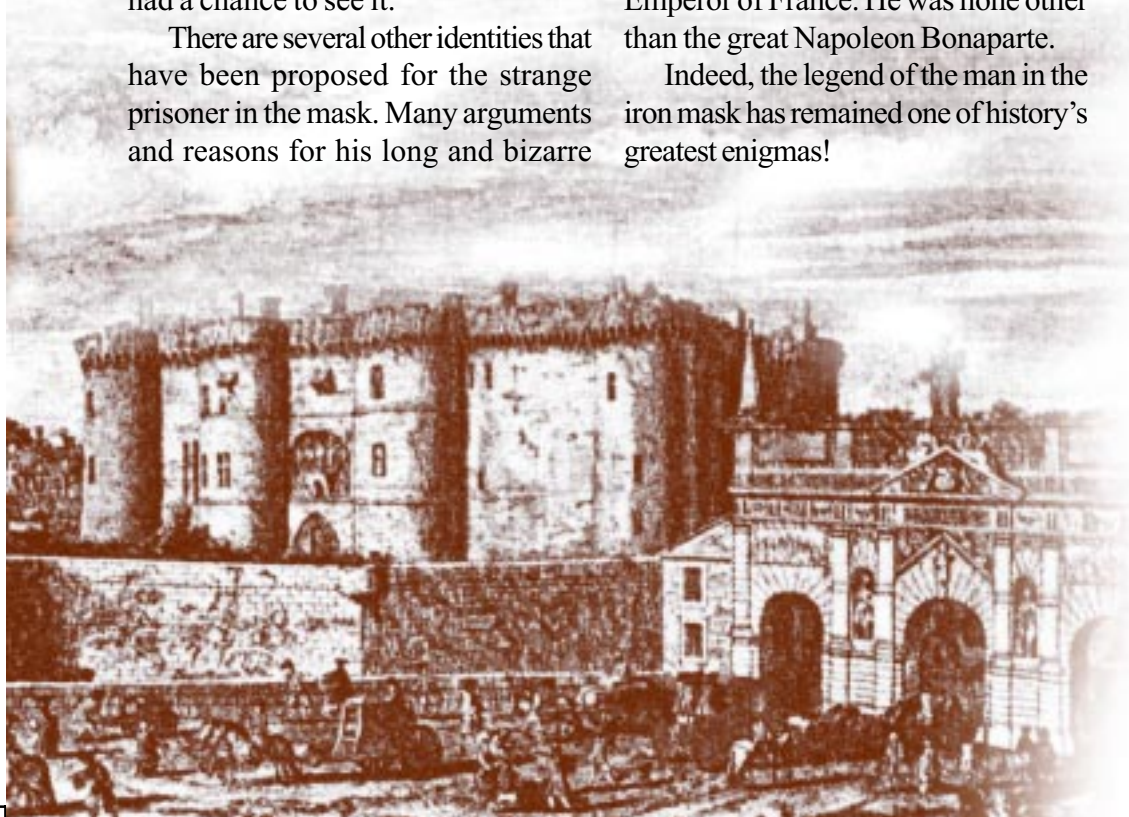
There are several other identities that have been proposed for the strange prisoner in the mask. Many arguments and reasons for his long and bizarre

confinement have been put forward. But historical evidence dismisses most of them and the mystery remains as baffling as ever.

Only one man, besides the king and his close associates, was aware of the truth. He was Monsieur de Saint-Mars, the governor of the castle in which the prisoner was lodged at first. When Saint-Mars was transferred to the Bastille, he brought along with his litter the man known only as the “ancient prisoner”, his face hidden by a mask.

It is believed that the man in the iron mask had a son who lived on the island of Corsica. His name was “de Buono Parte”. In course of time, one of his descendants was to be crowned as the Emperor of France. He was none other than the great Napoleon Bonaparte.

Indeed, the legend of the man in the iron mask has remained one of history’s greatest enigmas!





★ **Who invented the stethoscope, and when ?**

-Kamini Golgotia, New Delhi

A French doctor, Rene Theophile Laennec, one day saw some children scratching one end of a long wooden beam with a pin and listening to the sound transmitted through the beam at the other end. That gave him an idea; he carved a wooden cylinder one foot (30.5 cm) long and made perforations at one end and fixed an ear-piece at the other end. The stethoscope was born! The year was 1816. He put the perforated end of the tube to a patient's chest and listened to the noises made by the heart and lungs. He compared the noises made by different patients suffering from different illnesses and at different times. In 1819, he published the findings, and the stethoscope began to be used for diagnosing diseases. The modern stethoscope facilitates listening by both ears.

★ **Where is the world's highest waterfall?**

- Ramabrahmam, Vijayawada

The Angel Falls, falling into River Carrao from a height of 3,212 ft. in Venezuela, South America, is considered the highest. Strangely, the people there were not aware of the natural wonder as access to the region was difficult. Only when aeroplanes began flying over the area in the 1930s did they come to know of the waterfall. One plane, piloted by a U.S. explorer called James Angel, crashed near the fall in 1935. The waterfall got its name from him.

★ **Where was the first zoo established?**

- Mythili Sengupta, Hooghly

Three thousand years ago, a Chinese king called Wen wished to collect different kinds of animals and birds from all over his empire. He kept them in an enclosure near his palace. He called it a 'garden of intelligence'! The word 'zoo' comes from the expression 'zoological park'.

★ **How are perfumes made?**

- C.K.Pavithran, Cannanore

The scent of flowers is extracted by soaking them in greasy liquids or oils, which absorb the scent. This substance is then heated and the vapour is turned into liquid by cooling. The liquid is called perfume and is used in the manufacture of soap, powder, and other toiletries.

This may interest you!

Any idea how much time it will take to count 1,000,000 currency notes?
Believe it or not: 8 days, without a break!

Reader M.V.Ramakrishna of Vijayawada writes:

I am subscribing for *Chandamama* - Telugu, English, and Sanskrit. It will be invaluable if you can include Sanskrit conversation, Sanskrit grammar, and one or two slokas from our scriptures with transliteration, word by word meaning, and commentary in English. All these would help learn Sanskrit in an effective and easy manner.

Reader Minhaz of Mumbai has the following clarification to make:

This refers to the piece on Id-ul-Fitr in your December issue. I would like to point out that the Shia sect of Muslims do not observe the 21st and 22nd days of Ramadaan in mourning; they mourn on the 19th and 21st days. It was on the 19th day that Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law Ali was attacked with a sword dipped in poison; and on the 21st day he succumbed to the injuries. Thus the Shias mourn his martyrdom on the 21st day of Ramadaan.

**By e-mail from
Asif Lakhani:**

Your magazine is getting better issue by issue. The inclusion of the story of Ganesa is good.

I would like to read the stories of divine Shakti.



Reader K.Umapathi Pillai of Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, has this to say:

I have been an avid reader of your educative magazine from my school days. In your December issue, in "Saga of Vishnu", it is stated that sage Viswamitra cursed the Yadava community. To the best of my knowledge, it was Durvasa who pronounced the curse.

** According to the original story, Durvasa was one of the sages who had accompanied Viswamitra to Dwaraka.*

It was to Viswamitra the Yadava youth put the question whether the baby in the womb was a male or a female. The curse was pronounced by Viswamitra.

- Editor.



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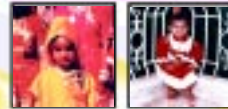
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**"Little Beauty"
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